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NICK CARTER STORIES

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NICK CARTER'S LAND OFFICE

ON THE INSTANT THE SWINDLER PUT HIS HAND ON THE DEAL-BOX, NICK'S DAGGER WAS DRIVEN THROUGH HIS COAT SLEEVE, PINNING HIS HAND TO THE TABLE.

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NICK CARTER STORIES

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NICK CARTER'S LAND OFFICE;

Or, OUTWITTING A CLEVER SWINDLER.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF A CRIME.

The steamer *Moccasin* was passing Sandy Hook early one Sunday evening in spring, when suddenly a savage cry rang out upon the clear air.

"You will never live to tell your story!"

And with these bitter words came a savage exclamation of profanity. There was a sound of a scuffle, and then a thud of a terrible blow delivered upon the head of a man who reeled along the deck too stunned at first to cry out.

The decks and the upper windows of the cabin of the *Moccasin* were practically deserted; hardly a soul was inside.

This was because dinner was being served and nearly all the employees were below, attending to their duties.

The ship was passing Sandy Hook on her way into New York harbor. She was on the last leg of her swift and pleasant trip from Jacksonville, Florida, to the metropolis.

As is customary on inward-bound ships, the happy passengers had gathered to the forward part of the craft, eagerly studying the lights of the city, glittering like lamps in the castles of fairyland. It was a beautiful sight. The great buildings could only be distinguished by the outlines of electric illumination, and the scrub women and janitors inside the myriads of offices cleaning up the tattered papers from the floors and desks of the business concerns located in the lower part of the city.

The ship would land that evening instead of waiting till morning, as the passengers had expected it to. For this reason they had all hurried pell-mell to the deck in order to see as much as possible of the view before too late.

In the stern of the ship one sailor was on watch, but between him and the forward deck, where the passengers had thronged, the craft was practically deserted on the upper deck. The sailor who was on duty aft was engrossed in the sight of the outgoing steamer, which was passing the *Moccasin* on her way to the vast spaces of the ocean to the East and South.

This man accordingly was oblivious of all which was going on between him and the bow of the boat on the main deck past the galley gangway. It was becoming darker all the time and it was doubtful if he could have seen the scuffle even though he had not been watching the passing craft.

It was a very opportune moment for the deed of violence which was being perpetrated. The passageway along the deck was narrow and long. This part of the galley house hid the two men from view. The man who had been struck arose to his feet and began to walk. He cried out, trying to defend himself as best he could.

This man was a poor fellow working his way from Jacksonville as a servant under the direction of the ship's cook. He was not a member of the crew.

He had come into the city before the ship sailed. He told the captain a story of destitution which so touched the commander's heart, that his plea for some kind of work which would take him to his home was at last granted. In answer to the captain's inquiries, he had admitted that he was not a sailor but was anxious to do any kind of work, from shoveling coal into the furnace to scrubbing the decks and washing dishes for the cook.

The man certainly was intent upon getting a passage, and had declared:

"I am willing to sleep on a coil of rope or eat other

people's leavings or do anything else. Surely you can't refuse."

And so it was that John Foster had placed himself in a position where additional troubles to those which he had told the captain were in store.

Peeling potatoes, scrubbing the filthy decks, carrying coal, washing dishes, and any and every other sort of task were cheerfully performed by this unusually industrious man.

It was after a hard day's work that he had been suddenly taken by surprise in this curious manner as he walked to the side of the ship and threw a pail of dishwater overboard. His assailant was a first-cabin passenger, who came rushing along the narrow deck before Foster could have any suspicion of foul play or any attempt to injure him whatsoever. Foster heard the steps but attended strictly to his own business before the striking of the blow and his unpreparedness nearly cost him his life with this first attack. The meaning of the curious words about his story did not come to him at the time, although he remembered them afterward.

The unfortunate man was so dazed and surprised that he could hardly see his enemy to put up a defense of any sort.

The pail in which he had carried the dishwater had dropped from his relaxed hand and fallen overboard into the sea.

By further mischance, it happened that just at the time of his struggle with the surprising assailant, the captain of the *Moccasin* had given a signal for a whistle salute to the passing ship on the port side of their own boat. This noise practically drowned out the cry which Foster had given. By the time the three salutes were over, the scuffling had ceased, for now there was only one man instead of two on deck near the galley house. The ruse had been successful.

The man was unusually powerful. He rained blow after blow with increasing force and rough fighting skill which surprised Foster, struggling against overwhelming odds in this one-sided encounter. Foster, almost unconscious, had been lifted with gigantic strength and carried to the rail.

"Overboard you go! No story from you, my fine fellow!"

Down the deck went the passenger after one swift glance to see the unfortunate Foster sink beneath the surface, and he turned away, laughing to himself.

The passenger calmly but sneakily crossed the deck, losing no time in getting across to the south side of the deck, and entered the handsome saloon of the *Moccasin*.

The man then paused a moment by the water cooler and calmly poured out a glass of the liquid for himself, glanced around without the slightest indication of anxiety, in such a manner that any one who had seen him then could not have believed his deed as possible or probable. He was very clever. With an easy, confident carriage, he walked forward and ascended to the upper deck, where he joined the passengers as unostentatiously as possible.

The ship had progressed several minutes before any one had noticed that the earnest assistant to the cook had disappeared. The men in the cook's galley looked at each other mystified as it dawned upon them that the man who had gone to throw the dishwater overboard had not returned.

"What's become of Foster?" asked one.

"He was here just a minute ago, or, at least, it seems but a minute," another man said.

Another man laughed and shook his head.

"I don't know where he has gone. I saw him step out of the door here just now. Where do you suppose he is?"

The others looked around in bewilderment. No one could exactly remember having seen Foster from the time he left the doorway. This was partly due to the fact that he always worked so quietly, and they seldom gave any attention to him. He was the sort of man who did things without the necessity for directions or harsh orders. In this case it would have been better if he had been missed at once or watched by the others.

So slyly and craftily had his disappearance been managed that it seemed as though some sort of black art had been used against him.

A strange coincidence of the whistle blowing at the right time to drown out all calls for assistance, the opportune grouping of the passengers—these showed that the desperate character, despite his apparent nonchalance, was indeed a man of high-power trickery.

"I surely can't see where that fellow went to, and I'm going to give him a call-down when I see him," declared the head cook impatiently.

"Oh, don't be sore on him, he's a good feller," interposed one of Foster's comrades.

The cook muttered and fumed, however, and blamed the man heartily. He was in a bad humor that day. His tips had not been excessive. It happened that he wished some particular personal errand attended to, and he depended upon Foster's reliability.

It was only when they wanted Foster to do something that they thought of him.

At this moment the work of the day was pretty well finished.

"I reckon," said the chief cook, "that Foster's struck."

"It's about time," added the assistant cook; "he's worked enough to pay for two passages."

"That's so. I wouldn't mind if we had him with us regularly."

Somebody suggested that probably Foster was on deck somewhere looking at the land. That explanation of his disappearance satisfied them. He was not one of the crew, and he would soon leave them, anyway; so it didn't matter if he did leave the galley a little earlier than had been expected. And no one down there thought of him again until the following morning.

Meantime Foster's hard luck turned just a little. An inbound schooner was a short distance behind the *Moccasin* at the moment when he was pitched over the rail. On board the schooner were several young men who had been spending the day fishing. They were now on their way home, and as they emptied more bottles than they had caught fish, they were in a jolly condition, and were singing a rollicking chorus.

Suddenly the fellow who was leading the singing stopped with a gasp of horror. He had been looking at the water as he sang, and now his sunburned face became so white that the others were startled into sudden quiet.

"Great Scott! what's the matter?" asked one of his companions, in a half whisper.

The leader pointed.

"I've got 'em," he stammered, "or I saw a dead man in there!"

Just then the schooner made a quick turn into the wind, and most of the young men were thrown to the deck. They scrambled up half laughing, half frightened, and demanded of the skipper to know what he meant.

The skipper's face was grim.

"There's a man out there," he answered shortly; "I seed him driftin' past."

He gave orders to the one man who served as his crew, and that man got forward with a boathook.

"There he is!" he cried, a moment later.

The young men, now sobered, gathered at the side, while the man forward caught at the floating body with his hook, and the passengers pulled him aboard.

"He isn't dead!" cried one.

Another hastened to the cabin and brought out a bottle of whisky.

"What luck!" exclaimed one, "that we didn't drink it all!"

A dose of the hot stuff was forced into Foster's mouth, and the young fellows went to rubbing him violently.

"Turn him upside down!" yelled the skipper, from his place at the wheel.

They started to obey, but Foster was not suffering much from submersion; he had taken in very little water. The trouble with him was that he had been struck so hard he was hardly conscious.

He put out his hands rather feebly to show that he had understood the order and that it wasn't necessary.

"Feeling better?" asked one of the young men.

Foster looked sorrowfully at him.

"Are you Mr. Carter?" he asked.

"No," replied the young man, offering him more liquor, "but one name will do as well as another until we get acquainted, won't it?"

Foster shook his head and pushed away the bottle.

"I want to see Mr. Carter," he said huskily—"Mr. Nicholas Carter, please."

"Gee!" exclaimed the young man, with a grin, "he thinks I'm the great detective. What do you think of that, fellows?"

"Nutty," answered one.

Foster looked at the last speaker. There was more sense in his gaze now.

"I don't know but I am," he said patiently; "I've been through enough to drive many a man into an insane asylum. And just now some fiend——"

He shuddered and looked around rather wildly. He was beginning to remember the attack made against him on board the *Moccasin*.

The young men were certain now that he was a crazy man.

"It's all right," they told him; "you're among friends."

"No," he answered; "I haven't any, unless Mr. Carter will be good enough to help me. I want to find him. Are we near New York?"

"Yes; this is the lower bay."

"Can't you put me ashore?"

"In about an hour, old chap——"

Here the skipper called to his crew.

"Sam," he said, "take the wheel. I'll see if I can bring the poor devil to his senses."

He then went up to Foster and helped him into the cabin. The young men stood back, feeling that the skipper could do more than they could.

"How did you happen to be in the water, mate?" asked the skipper kindly. "Fall off'n one of them steamers?"

Foster put his hands to his aching head. For a moment he was silent.

"I s'pose I'm acting like a loony," he answered, "and perhaps I'm off my base, but, if you don't mind, I'd rather not tell my story to anybody, except Mr. Carter."

"Do you mean the famous detective?"

"Yes; I've heard that he's kind-hearted."

"So he is. Well, you go and see him, but first you must get into dry clothes. Dunno as I can fit you very well, but there's some old duds of mine and Sam's here that you're welcome to, if you'll put 'em on."

"Thank you, I will."

The skipper was hunting through a locker.

"Excuse the question," said he, as he pulled out some clothing, "but you don't look as if you was well heeled. Got much money with you?"

"Not a cent, but I will work to pay you——"

"Stow that mate! stow that! I don't want any pay. I was only wonderin' how you'd get to Mr. Carter's."

"I can walk."

"But we shall land on Staten Island."

"Well, that's not many miles from the city, is it? I can walk, I tell you."

"On the water, mate? You didn't seem to be doin' much walkin' when we come acrost you."

The skipper smiled at his own humor, and Foster looked troubled.

"Aren't there any bridges?" he asked.

"Nary one. Only ferries."

"Well, I worked my passage from Jacksonville——"

"Oh! then you were aboard the *Moccasin?*"

"Yes."

"See here! you didn't go overboard on purpose, did you?"

"On purpose?" echoed Foster, astonished. "I should say not! What would I come as far as this for if I wanted to give up?"

"Then some cuss pitched you over?"

Foster's brow darkened.

"Yes," he answered; "that's it."

The skipper drew a long breath.

"Well, by ginger!" he exclaimed, "if you want to tell Nick Carter about that, I'll see that you get to New York all right, all right."

He told Foster to change his clothes, and went out on deck.

"Young men," said he, "that chap ain't no loony. He's had his wits knocked on their beam ends, but he'll right in time. He wants to take his trouble to Nick Carter, and he hasn't got a cent. Says he worked his way up from Jacksonville, and he dreams of workin' his passage from Staten Island to the city."

He paused, and the young men smiled.

"He hain't got a cent," continued the skipper. "Now, I says we must take a subscription to help him along. Gents, ante up liberal!"

With this the skipper took off his hat and passed it. Coins fell into it freely, and, when Foster had got into dry clothes, the skipper took the money to him. By that time the unfortunate man was a good deal better. His head did not ache so badly, and his thoughts were clearer. He almost cried when the skipper poured the coins on the cabin table.

"I ain't used to havin' people kind to me," he said.

"The captain of the *Moccasin* was all right, and I haven't got anything against the crew, but the rest of the world has been mighty rough with me. I'll take this money, skipper, if you'll let me bring it back to you some day."

"Oh, that's all right. The boys chipped in."

Foster would not be satisfied, however, until he had written the skipper's name on a piece of paper.

"I'll come for my own clothes to-morrow," he said, "and, by the bye, when I get regular work, I'll return the money."

"Say nothin' more about that," responded the skipper gruffly, as he went back to the wheel.

An hour later the schooner came to anchor off Rosebank, and the passengers went ashore.

The young men, who belonged in New York City, kept Foster with them on the train and ferry, and did not part from him until they were at the Battery.

Then one of them looked up Nick Carter's address in a directory, and told Foster how to find the house.

"It's pretty late," he remarked; "better not bother the detective till morning."

"I shan't sleep," replied Foster stubbornly, "until I've seen him."

And so it came about that there was a ring at Nick's bell almost at the moment when Sunday was going out, and Monday was coming in.

CHAPTER II

FOSTER'S HARD LUCK.

It happened, luckily for John Foster, that Nick Carter was at home. All others in the house were asleep, but the great detective was in his library, interested in a book.

He heard the bell, and went down himself to answer it. He found a poorly dressed stranger was on the step, who started a bit when Nick pressed a button that suddenly threw his face into a glare of light.

"Does Mr. Carter live here?" the man asked, in a trembling voice.

"Which Carter, my friend?"

"Nicholas Carter, the detective."

"I am he."

Foster, for it was he, stared, speechless for a moment. Then he caught Nick by the sleeve.

"For God's sake, sir," he said hoarsely, "will you hear my story?"

Nick looked calmly at his visitor. He noticed the wild eyes, the man's excitement, and he half suspected that the man was an escaped lunatic. But the man's distress was evidently real, and, even if he were a lunatic, it would be wise to talk with him, and, meantime, send quietly to Bellevue for physicians to take charge of him.

"Come in," said the detective.

Foster followed Nick to the library, where he remained standing until Nick told him to sit down.

"Now," said the detective, in a friendly tone, "let's begin at the beginning. Tell me who you are, where you live, and how you got into trouble."

The man's lips trembled and his voice was very unsteady as he responded:

"There's one thing, Mr. Carter, that must be said before that."

"Well, what is it?"

"I can't pay you a cent. I'm a beggar! All I've got in the world is this."

Here he took a few silver coins from his pocket.

"And that," he added, was lent to me by some men who fished me out of the bay this evening."

"You needn't worry about paying me," said Nick, "but tell me why you came to me, if you haven't any money. Detectives usually get fees, you know."

"Yes. I do know, but I come to you because I hope you will be willing to do something so that other men may not be made the victims of the same rascally injustice that has made me a beggar."

Foster spoke with great earnestness, and the detective began to believe that he was not crazy.

"Very well," Nick said quietly, "let me know all about it, and begin as I told you—name and residence first."

"My name is John Foster. I don't live anywhere now. My home used to be in Grafton, Massachusetts—a town near Worcester. I had a farm there. It wasn't the best farm in the world, Mr. Carter. No need to tell you that. That part of the country is covered with rocks, the soil isn't deep, and it takes a mighty lot of hard work to make a living from a farm there.

"All the same, I was knocking out a living, and bringing up my family in decent style. But I wanted to better myself. What man doesn't? I wanted to get some money ahead, and I found that impossible.

"To be sure, I had a little. The farm was free from debt, and I had two hundred dollars in the savings bank; but that was all there was to show for fifteen years of the hardest kind of work, and pinching and scraping, from one year's end to another.

"I wish to goodness I'd had the sense to stick to what I had. It was little enough, but it was a good deal better than nothing."

Foster sighed bitterly.

"I suppose," suggested the detective, "that you were induced to invest in something that didn't turn out well?"

"Yes, sir; that was it. That's the story, but, if it was only a case of putting money into a business that didn't pay, I wouldn't bother you to hear about it. I was swindled, Mr. Carter, awfully swindled, and, if something isn't done, other foolish farmers will be caught in the same trap."

He took some water-soaked papers from his pocket and handed them to Nick.

"I guess you can read them," he said. "They were in my clothes when I was thrown into the bay, and, of course, they got pretty wet, but I think you can make out what they say."

Nick glanced at the papers. Some were printed, others written.

"How did you get these?" he asked.

"The first came through the mail," replied Foster. "As you see, it is a letter asking me to look into some lands down in Florida. It simply says that there are good farming lands for sale there, and asks me to call at the office and find out about them."

"Did you call?"

"I did. The office was in Worcester, as you see from the letterhead. I saw a man there whose name was Guy Preble. He told me a fine story about the lands, showed me a map, and gave me the second paper, which has in print all he told me."

Nick looked over the second paper. It was a description of Florida farm lands, telling how good the soil was, how oranges might be raised at great profit, and a lot of other statements that would be likely to interest a Northern farmer.

"The long and short of it is," said Foster, "that I decided to buy land in Florida. You'll see some letters there from Preble about price and so forth. He made me believe the chance was such a good one that I bought all the land I possibly could. I not only took my two hundred dollars from the bank, but I sold my farm and all the fixings.

"I paid Preble pretty nearly every dollar I had, keeping back only enough to pay our traveling expenses to Florida, and a little more to begin on after we got there."

"Well," said Nick, "did you find that you had bought any land after you got there?"

"Oh, yes; I had bought land right enough, plenty of it, but it was under water, every foot of it."

"Indeed!"

"It was a swamp, sir. There wasn't a square rod of it that could be used for raising anything but alligators and snakes. You might think, perhaps, that there would be timber on it that could be cut down and sold.

"No, sir! There wasn't a stick of timber on the property that could be used even for firewood. It was all a tangle of creeping vines and worthless bushes and long grass growing out of the water."

"Couldn't it be drained?" asked Nick.

"I should say not! Why, sir, the bottom of that swamp was below sea level. It couldn't be made dry land in a million years."

"What did you do when you found you had been swindled?"

"I got my wife and children a place to stay with some poor people a few miles from my swamp, and then I went gunning for Preble."

"And you didn't find him."

"Yes, I did."

"But not in Florida."

"Yes, sir; in Florida."

"That's surprising. I wouldn't have supposed he would show himself down there."

"He did. He lives there. I found him at Palm Beach."

"Oh!"

Nick said this as if the words "Palm Beach" threw a good deal of light on the matter. He was thinking of the fact that while Palm Beach is a resort for fashionable people, it is also a headquarters for persons of shady reputation, on account of the heavy gambling that goes on there.

"What did he say to you?" asked the detective.

"He told me to go to the devil. Said I had bought the land, and that it was no longer any of his business."

"Are you sure that Preble had the right to sell that land?"

"Yes; I looked that up in the county clerk's office down there. He had a right to it, and I had bought it. That was all straight. The point is that he had been false in his descriptions——"

"Wait! these papers do not describe the land you bought. They merely speak of lands generally in Florida."

"I know, but——"

"He led you to believe that your land was of the same kind."

"Yes, sir, and there's where he swindled me."

"True, but there isn't a line in any of his letters that says what isn't so. You let yourself into the trap, you see."

"I know it," said Foster bitterly, "but that doesn't make him any the less a cheat and a swindler, does it?"

"In one sense it doesn't, but in another it's different. He seems to have kept within the law."

Foster started up with a groan of despair.

"Then nothing can be done!" he cried.

"I'm not so sure about that," responded Nick. "Sit down again. Tell me more about your talk with Preble."

"There isn't much to tell. I said he'd swindled me and that I would expose him. He laughed at me, and said there would be nothing to expose except my own foolishness. I demanded that he give me my money back, and he laughed again. Then I told him that I'd go back North, if I had to walk, and put the matter in Nick Carter's hands."

"Ah! you mentioned my name, did you?"

"Yes. I had a fool idea it would scare him."

"Did it?"

"Yes, and no. In the first place, he sneered and asked how I would pay Carter the big fee he would demand. Then he wanted to know how my family would live while I was gone. My family! Curse him! He——"

Nick interrupted, for Foster was getting into a passion.

"Slow," said the detective gently; "I'll hear all about it in time. Go on with what he said."

"He didn't say anything more except to order me out, and suggest that I'd better make the best of it and get work to do."

"Well?"

"An Indian servant of his opened the door for me and I went out. There was nothing else to do, though I felt like killing him, and if I had known what had happened, I believe I should have done it."

"What had happened?"

Foster's eyes filled with tears, and his voice shook.

"It took me some days," he said, "to go to Palm Beach and back, for I had to hoof it most of the way.

"When I returned to the place where I left my family I found that my children had got swamp fever. One of them was dead and buried already. Two others died before I had been back a week."

The unhappy man bowed his head on his hands.

"I pity you deeply," said Nick.

"Thank you for that," moaned Foster. "At last there was only my wife and one little one left. My wife had a fearful attack of the fever, but we managed to get her out of it. By that time all my money was gone.

"I tried to get work. There wasn't much to be had, and the climate was against us. We were not used to it. At last I felt that the only way out of it was to get North somehow, where I might at least get work as a farmhand and save enough to send for my wife and child. So I got them a place to stay where my wife could do some work in part payment of her board, and I walked to Jacksonville."

Foster then told about his voyage, and the attack made upon him as the steamer was coming up the bay.

The detective was intensely interested.

"Was it Preble who attacked you?" he asked.

"No. I couldn't see the man, but I know it wasn't Preble's voice. I think it was a partner of his named Taylor."

"Oh! he has a partner, eh?"

"I think so. I saw a man with him whose name was Taylor, and it seemed to be his voice that spoke when I was struck."

"That's why I said 'yes' and 'no' when you asked me if the mention of your name scared him. It seems to show that they watched me, and tried to prevent me from coming to you."

"That was it undoubtedly."

"And then there was another thing that I forgot."

"What was that?"

"After I had left Preble at Palm Beach I was attacked by his Indian servant. It was in the evening. The redskin leaped at me with a knife from some bushes I was passing. Luckily I heard him and dodged in time. We had a struggle, and I downed him, but he wriggled away and disappeared."

"Are you sure it was Preble's servant?"

"Oh, yes; I saw him plainly."

"What was he called?"

"Penola."

Nick was silent for a minute or so, thinking. He was filled with anger as he thought of what Foster had suffered, but he saw that it would be a very difficult matter to bring Preble to justice. It wasn't like a murder case, or theft, where a criminal was to be discovered and captured. Preble had done wrong, but he had been clever enough to keep within the law.

"I don't believe he can be touched," thought Nick, "for the swindling that he has already done. I shall have to trap him in some new scheme."

Aloud he said:

"I will look into this matter, Mr. Foster. Meantime, I think it would be decidedly unsafe for you to leave this house."

"Why——" began Foster.

"Your enemy," interrupted the detective, "came to the city. He knew what you were coming for, and, although he may think that you are at the bottom of the bay, he won't take chances on that. If he's as shrewd as I think he is, he will watch this house. I shouldn't be surprised if he saw you come in."

"Then what can I do? I want to go back to Staten Island in the morning to get my clothes, which will be dry by then, and return these. And I must get work as soon as possible."

"It won't do you any good to look for work and be murdered," replied Nick. "You stay here to-night, and don't leave the house until I tell you to. I'll see the skipper about your clothes. Don't worry about anything."

"You're very kind, Mr. Carter."

"No; I simply want to see if I can stop that villain from cheating any more men."

Nick then led Foster to a sleeping room and left him.

"If that isn't an honest man then I'm greatly mistaken," he said to himself, "but I must be on the safe side. Fortunately, there's an easy way to find out."

CHAPTER III.

THE REDSKIN.

Early in the morning Nick went to the dock where the *Moccasin* lay. He went aboard, asked for the captain, and, when he found him, said:

"I have called to ask about a man who says he came up from Jacksonville with you. His name is John Foster."

"Foster!" cried the captain. "I'd like to know about him myself. I've been hunting high and low for him."

"Then there was such a man on board?"

"Yes, he——"

"Thank you. That is really all I wished to know."

"But wait a minute, sir. This man Foster has disappeared, and I am very anxious about him."

"Why?"

"Because I took an interest in him. He came to me with the saddest hard-luck story I ever heard. He wanted to tell the detective, Nick Carter, about it, and I meant to go with him to Carter. I'm not acquainted with the detective, but I understand he's a good sort of man, and I thought that if I was along he might perhaps pay some attention to Foster's story."

"Like enough," responded Nick, smiling, "but he paid some attention to it as it was. I am Carter."

"Good Lord!" cried the captain, holding out his hand. "I'm proud to meet you. But tell me about Foster. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, last night."

"Ah! then that accounts for it. He slipped ashore as soon as we got to the dock."

"No; you are mistaken. He was thrown into the bay by one of your passengers."

The captain was amazed.

"I suppose you know what you're talking about," he said slowly, "and that may account for the way the cook missed him."

"How was that?"

The captain told how he had inquired at the cook's galley an hour before for Foster, and how the cook said nobody had seen him since some time last evening.

"They supposed he had struck work and joined the passengers," said the captain, "but I thought it strange that he should leave the ship without speaking to me."

"Did you have a passenger named Taylor?"

"I think not, but I'll see."

He sent for the purser, who brought a list of the cabin passengers. The name Taylor did not appear on it.

"Take a pencil," said Nick, "and put a mark against the names of all the passengers with whom you are acquainted."

The captain did so. Not counting women and children, there were the names of eight men who, he said, were strangers to him.

Nick then asked the captain to tell him about each one of the men passengers whom he did know. In this way the detective became satisfied that the would-be murderer was not one of those known to the captain.

"He was one of those eight," said Nick. "I must find out what became of each one of them."

He copied the names, and then went down to Staten Island, where he found the skipper who had rescued Foster. From him the detective learned enough to show that Foster had spoken the truth in everything.

Nick explained that the rescued man could not come down for his clothes at that time, which the skipper said wasn't necessary anyway, and then the detective went back home.

He gave the list of eight names to Patsy, and told him to trace them, first getting as good a description as Foster could give of Taylor, Preble's partner.

To Chick he said:

"You must keep this man under guard until you hear from me. It won't be safe for him to go out alone. I shall probably start for Florida to-night."

Patsy returned at the end of the afternoon with the list of names.

"Wilson," said Patsy, "went in a cab from the steamer to the Grand Central Station and took a train for Buffalo. Johnson went to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and is there now. He's a rich man, who lives in Chicago. Mortimer is a New Yorker. He lived on West Seventy-second Street, and he went home. To-day he has been at his business place. Richards, I'm not dead sure about him, but I think he started South on the midnight train from the Pennsylvania Station."

"That's interesting," interrupted Nick. "A man travels up from the South by boat and starts back again before he's been four hours on land. How did you get onto it, Patsy?"

"I learned at the dock," replied the young detective, "that the baggage of one passenger was sent for in a hurry to be taken to the Pennsylvania Station. I couldn't make certain which man it was, but it seemed to be Richards."

"Well?"

"Of course, I asked some questions at the railroad station. I described Taylor as Foster described him. Ticket seller and baggage man agreed that a man of that description took the midnight train. He bought a ticket for Jacksonville."

Nick turned to Foster.

"Did you hear Taylor's full name?" he asked.

Foster thought a moment.

"I was going to say 'no,'" he answered, "but as I think of it I remember that Preble addressed him once as Dick."

"Dick," repeated Nick thoughtfully. "That's the nickname for Richard, and Richard is almost Richards, isn't it? I guess it's a pretty safe thing, Mr. Foster, that your man is now on his way back to Florida."

"Then he must believe that he succeeded in killing me."

"Possibly, but he may be afraid of being captured. Perhaps he saw the schooner pick you up."

When Nick had heard the rest of Patsy's report, he was more certain than ever that Foster's enemy had started back for the South on the same night that he arrived in New York. He gave various instructions to his assistants, got all the information he could from Foster, advised him to stay where he was until it was certain that he could go about without danger, and then started for Florida. As he wished to lose no time, he went by rail.

He did not go straight to Palm Beach, but instead looked up Foster's wife and child before doing anything else.

Nick did not tell Mrs. Foster who he was, but he said that he was a friend of her husband's, and gave her some money, as if it came from him.

"I wouldn't say anything about this," he cautioned her, "for Preble might hear of it, and if he did he might give you trouble."

Mrs. Foster promised to keep quiet, and told Nick the way to the swamp that her husband had been induced to buy.

The detective took a short look at it.

"No wonder Foster was discouraged," he thought. "There are thousands of acres there that never can be of use to anybody."

His next call was at the county clerk's office, where he asked who owned the swamp lands.

"Well," replied the clerk, "most of that land stands in the name of Guy Preble, but I believe he's transferred a good part of it to a company."

"Ah! who is Preble?"

"We only know that he's a Northern capitalist."

"Indeed! then he hasn't owned the swamp very long?"

"Oh, no; not more than two years. He bought it for next to nothing, for it isn't worth anything. I understand that he thinks of draining it somehow."

"What about this company?"

"I don't know except what he has said. He says he has got a number of Northern people interested in it. Some of them have bought parts of the swamp."

"Are they satisfied with their purchases?" asked Nick.

"I don't know that I ought to say anything," the clerk answered, "for it's none of my business, but the fact is that there have been a number of men here to complain that they've been swindled. But we can't do anything for them. I'm afraid there's been dishonest work, but, you see, Preble owned the land, and he sold it. What can we do about it?"

"Nothing. He hasn't sold it all, has he?"

"Oh, no! A good three-quarters of it is still in his possession."

That was all Nick wanted to know. He had no doubt that in time Preble would try to sell the rest of his worthless swamp to unsuspecting farmers, and he made up his mind to prevent him from doing so if possible. Then he started for Palm Beach, but he stopped overnight in St. Augustine on the way.

Late in the evening he left his hotel and went for a walk. He had gone beyond the town and was on his way back when his attention was attracted by a sound of scuffling.

It was a lonely place. There were no houses near, and at a little distance was a forest. At first the detective supposed that a couple of negroes were wrestling good-naturedly. Then he heard angry words.

Running lightly forward, he came upon two men who had one another gripped by the wrists. They were breathing hard, and each was trying to trip the other. As Nick drew near, one of them succeeded. The other stumbled and fell, and as he went down, he lost his grip. Then in the darkness Nick saw an arm raised. There was a faint flash as a knife blade descended.

"Stop!" shouted the detective loudly.

He was too far away at that instant to leap upon the man who had the knife, but the unexpected sound of his voice did just what he hoped it would.

The man who was about to strike held back his arm and looked around. The other man was quick to take advantage of the situation and scrambled up to begin the fight again.

At that the one with the knife turned upon him, and again aimed a blow. But by that time Nick was on the spot, and struck the upper man a stinging blow that sent him staggering along the road. At the same instant the detective caught the man's knife hand, twisted the wrist, and caused him, with a snarl of pain, to let go of the weapon, which fell to the ground.

Then Nick found himself in trouble for a moment. The other man had got to his feet and was coming at him. He had some kind of a weapon raised.

"Steady, neighbor!" exclaimed the detective, grappling him so that he could not move.

It was well that he did so, for it proved that the man

had a loaded revolver, and in another half second he would have fired it straight in the detective's face.

"Let me alone, curse you!" grunted the man, trying to bring the muzzle of his weapon against Nick's breast.

Nick forced him to his knees, and then wrenched the revolver away from him.

"You don't seem to think very well of me for saving you from being stabbed to death," remarked Nick.

"What's that?" demanded the other, panting; "ain't you one of Preble's heelers?"

The mention of that name gave Nick a new interest in the affair. But there was something else——

"Wait," said he; "listen!"

He was still holding the man on his knees. Both were quiet for a moment. They heard a sound of breaking twigs and hurried footfalls in the direction of the forest. The sounds grew fainter and fainter.

"The infernal redskin's got away," muttered the man.

"Penola?" asked Nick.

"That's his name. You know him, do you?"

"I think I've heard of him."

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE GAMBLING TABLE.

Nick now let go of the man, and handed him his revolver.

"I guess you don't want to use that on me," he remarked.

"No," responded the man wonderingly, "I don't. I understand now. At first I thought you was another of the rascally gang, but if it hadn't been for you that redskin would have made a hole in me, wouldn't he?"

"It looked that way."

"Well, I'm much obliged to you. What are you looking for?"

Nick was on his knees and feeling of the ground.

"Penola's knife," he answered. "Here it is."

He struck a match to examine it.

"Gosh!" exclaimed the man, looking on, "I'd rather have a square meal inside of me than that thing."

It was a dagger of peculiar pattern. The blade was about six inches long, and two inches broad at the hilt, and it fitted into a case somewhat like that of a razor.

When Nick shut the blade into the case it flew back again.

"Huh!" he muttered; "that's odd."

"Fastens with a spring, likely," said the man.

"Yes."

Nick shut it again and found how to fasten it. He also saw that when the knife was closed it could be opened in a flash by pressing the spring.

"Nice plaything," he said, "I guess I'll keep it," and he put it in his pocket.

"Should think you would," responded the man. "I don't know how to thank you for helping me just now——"

"Don't try."

"I thought sure you was another of 'em. Who are you, anyway, mister?"

"Never mind who I am," replied Nick, "but tell me how you happened to have trouble with Penola."

"Why, I suppose I got into trouble with him because he does his master's dirty work."

"Do you refer to Guy Preble?"

"I do, curse him!"

"What has he done to you?"

"Done! he's robbed me of every dollar I ever had, and he's done it in such a way that he's got the law on his side."

"Did you buy swamp land?"

"Yes, fool that I was! It's all under water to stay—but perhaps you got caught in the same deal, mister?"

"No, but I've heard about it. Did you buy in Worcester?"

"Yes. You seem to know all about it——"

"Where did you live?"

"In Spencer, a little way from Worcester."

"Did you bring your family to Florida?"

"No, because I haven't got any to bring."

"Then you're luckier than some."

"That's so. There was a man named Foster, for instance. He came down here with his wife and four children. Three of 'em died, and there wasn't a thing he could do for a living. He went North a while ago. I made up my mind I'd do the same, and I went to Preble to see if I couldn't raise the price of a ticket."

"You didn't get it, I suppose?"

"No. We had a jawing match, and I started for the cabin of a friend of mine a few miles out to spend the night. Then I was attacked by that slippery redskin. You know the rest."

"All this shows," thought Nick, "that Preble is afraid of being exposed. He will murder any man who seems to have the nerve to get back North and show him up."

"Where did you see Preble?" he asked.

"In the city," replied the man.

"St. Augustine?"

"Yes," and he named the hotel at which Preble was staying. It was the same hotel at which Nick had put up.

The detective then asked the man his name.

"Joe Hawkins," was the reply.

"Well, Hawkins, if you'll take the advice of a stranger, you'll stay in Florida a little longer. Get something to do if you can and lie low. Keep out of Preble's way. This land swindle may be made straight some day."

"Are you going to expose Preble?" asked Hawkins eagerly.

"I'd rather not talk about that," replied Nick. "Will you follow my advice?"

"Yes, I will. You've saved my life, and I'll do anything you say."

"Then stay here till you see me again or hear from me."

Nick took the man's address, and then went back to his hotel. He inquired of the clerk if Guy Preble was in, and learned that the swindler had paid his bill and left an hour before.

The next day the detective went to Palm Beach. As soon as he had engaged a room at a hotel, he went to the building where gambling was carried on. There was a great crowd in the rooms, men and women both, and many tables were going.

Nick wandered around the rooms for a time, looking the crowd over and pausing now and then beside a table where high play was in progress. At last he found what he was looking for.

Foster had not been good at describing faces, so that Nick did not recognize Preble by sight; but as he stood

watching a table he heard a man at his side say in a low voice:

"Play on the black, Guy. It has been red seven times in succession."

The man spoken to was seated with a considerable pile of chips in front of him. The other was standing at his side, and was not playing.

"Preble and his partner, Taylor, I guess," thought Nick.

The man addressed as Guy put half his chips on the black the next time the wheel was turned.

Other persons placed their bets until the board was almost covered with chips or money.

For a moment there was a low, whirring sound as the marble spun around the rim of the wheel. Then there was a rattling as it began to fall and struck against the guards of the slots one after another.

All heads were turned anxiously toward the wheel. The marble fell into one slot, only to hop out again and drop into another. It bounded out again and went jumping along until finally it dropped into a slot and stayed there.

The croupier, that is, the man who turned the wheel, looked at the slot and called:

"Thirty, even, third column, third dozen, red."

"You're a fine tipster, Dick," grumbled Guy, as the croupier raked in his chips.

"Well, it was time for black to win, anyway."

"Huh! perhaps you'll give me a number now that I'd better play flat foot."

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm a loser to-day," he responded. "Decide for yourself."

"Make your bets," called the croupier, as he prepared to spin the marble again.

At this call money and chips rained on the board. Preble, for Nick was now certain that it was he, hesitated a little, and then placed half of what he had left so that his bet "straddled" 23 and 26.

The marble began to whir. Somebody reached over and laid a single chip on the zero. Another pushed a twenty-dollar bill on the square marked "Even."

The marble began to jump.

"Nothing more goes," called the croupier.

Just at that instant Preble placed the rest of his chips on the square marked "Black."

The croupier saw him do this, but said nothing, and the bet, therefore, was accepted.

After the usual hopping about, the marble fell into a slot. The croupier's voice rose above the remarks of the players, who did not need to be told what had happened, for all could see where the marble landed.

"Fourteen, black, second dozen, middle column."

The chips that Preble had placed on the 23 to 26 were raked in, but the same amount was pushed up beside those he had placed on the black.

"Stand off," he muttered.

He had lost one bet and won another.

"You ought to have put them all on the black," said Dick.

"Rats!" retorted Preble; "why didn't you tell me to put them on the fourteen?"

Dick turned about and walked away.

"Make your bets," called the croupier.

Evidently Preble meant to play longer, and as Nick wanted to study him, and get acquainted, if possible, he decided to make a small play himself, for, if he stood there without playing, attention would be attracted to him, and Preble's suspicions might be aroused.

Accordingly the detective put a silver dollar on the zero. Preble put half his chips on the odd and kept the rest back.

"Nothing more goes," came the warning voice of the croupier, and a moment later there were a lot of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" from those around the table.

The marble had stopped in zero. Everybody had lost except Nick. The croupier handed him thirty-five chips, valued at a dollar each, and play went on.

Naturally, everybody looked at the lucky man.

"Great luck to pick a winner the first time," remarked Preble.

"It probably won't happen again," laughed Nick.

Preble did not bet on the next turn of the wheel. The detective pocketed his silver dollar, and placed his chips in two bets.

He put ten against the row that contained the numbers "7-8-9," and the rest on the square marked "Even."

The other players scattered their bets as before.

"Nothing more goes," cried the croupier.

The marble whirred, and rattled, and stopped in the slot marked "eight." Nick had won both bets. He was paid one hundred and twenty chips for the ten placed against the figures and twenty-five for those on the "Even."

Not a muscle on his face moved as he took in his winnings, which at that moment amounted to one hundred and eighty dollars. Some of the other players had won on the turn, but, as usual, most of them had lost.

Now Nick had no wish to gamble. He had already exchanged words with Preble, which was a step forward in his business, and his next wish was to get into private talk with the man.

"I'll lose all this as fast as I can," thought the detective. Then I can leave the table. If Preble doesn't follow me I can meet him later in the day, and there will be no difficulty in getting into conversation with him."

Accordingly, when the croupier called, "Make your bets," Nick put one hundred and fifty dollars on the black, and the balance of his chips on the third dozen.

Preble watched him, and then placed all his own chips, amounting to about fifty dollars, on the third dozen. He was following the detective's play, but he followed wrong, for the marble stopped in the slot marked "two."

Nick lost the bet he had placed on the third dozen, but won even money on the color. Preble lost all he had in sight.

"I ought to have divided," he muttered, discontentedly.

"I'll make him lose if I can," Nick thought, as he saw Preble diving into his pocket for more money. So, instead of dividing his chips at the next turn, Nick put them all, amounting to three hundred dollars, on the black. That color had just come up. It was probable, therefore, that red would come up next, and Nick wanted to lose. If he lost that bet it would have cost him nothing to play, for he still had the silver dollar with which he began.

Preble took out a roll of big bills. From them he selected a century, and reached out his hand as if he meant to follow the detective again. Then he hesitated. Evidently he reasoned that as black had just come up

it would be red's turn next; and that it was not likely that any player would win four bets in succession. So he changed his mind just at the last moment, and laid his hundred dollars on the red.

The marble fell into a slot.

"Fourteen," called the croupier, "second dozen, middle column, black wins."

"Ha!" exclaimed Preble, "you can't lose, can you?"

"Not if I don't play any more," replied Nick.

He pushed over the stacks of chips he had won, and called for cash.

Nick was afraid of attracting too much attention to himself. He had not played very high as the game goes at Palm Beach, but he had won four times running, and that was enough to make people stare, especially as his silver dollar had brought in a comparatively large amount.

The croupier paid him six hundred dollars, and called: "Make your bets."

Nick crammed the money carelessly into a vest pocket, and edged his way out of the crowd around the table. There were more persons there than when he began to play, for news of his luck had traveled fast. Men and women were coming up from other tables to watch the luck of the newcomer.

CHAPTER V.

A PRIVATE GAME.

Nick disappointed them. He strolled slowly out, pausing near the entrance to get a light at the cigar stand. While he was there, another man paused for the same purpose. It was Preble.

"This is your lucky day," said he.

"It looks so," replied Nick pleasantly.

"I should have thought you would press your luck. You might have broken the bank in a few minutes."

Nick shook his head.

"Good luck can't last forever," he said.

"True, but you could have afforded to lose a few bets. I believe you'd have come out a heavy winner."

"Time enough for that."

"You're going to stay a while, then?"

"A few days."

Both had their cigars lighted now, and they walked out together.

"Luck was against me to-day," remarked Preble. "In fact, I might have known after I played my first bet that I couldn't win."

"Why?"

"Because a certain old woman came up and began to play on the other side of the table."

Nick remembered that opposite him had stood an elderly woman, richly dressed, who bet a five-dollar gold piece at every turn, taking the coins from a bag that she carried. When she won, she left the chips on the table and continued to bet with gold.

"Do you think she queered your game?" he asked.

"I know she did."

"Why?"

"Because it happens every time. I never win when she plays at the same table. This morning I saw her at one table and I took pains to get a seat at another, but no sooner had I begun than she waddled around to my table and began her infernal piking."

Nick did not laugh. He knew that regular gamblers are often superstitious in just that way.

"Has she got anything against you?" he asked seriously.

"Not that I know of," replied Preble, with equal seriousness. "I'm not acquainted with her, though, of course, I know all about her."

"I suppose she's a regular, then?"

"You bet she is! You wouldn't ask if you'd been here long."

"I've just arrived, and never was here before."

"Well, you'll meet some queer people. Countess Telka is one of them."

"Is that the old lady you refer to?"

"Yes. She has spent her whole life at the roulette table. In Baden Baden she went through a fortune. Then she got hold of some more money, and went to Monte Carlo. There she played in luck, and after several years became very rich."

"And she didn't stop?"

"Not she. She heard of Palm Beach, and so she came over here early in the winter to try it. She's been playing steadily ever since."

"Has she won?"

"Yes. How much I don't know, but she never loses much. She takes just so much money with her in gold pieces to the table. If she loses them she stops for the day. If she strikes a winning streak she presses her luck and hauls off a good pile."

"Funny you can't win when she's playing."

"I know it is, but I can't. She's my hoodoo."

"Well," said Nick, "you quit the game, and so did I, and for pretty much the same reason."

"Why! did you see a hoodoo at the table, too?"

"No one person. It was the crowd."

"Ah!"

"I don't like a crowd around when I'm playing."

"I see. You like a nice quiet game between gentlemen, without any strangers looking on."

"That's my style."

Nick, of course, had his reasons for talking in this way. In the first place, he wanted to convince Preble that he was not a professional gambler. In the second, he hoped to draw the fellow out, and so get on close terms with him.

The detective succeeded.

Preble smoked a moment in silence, and then said: "The fact is, I like a quiet game better myself. If you feel like going into one, I think I can accommodate you."

"I don't mind," Nick responded; "what's your game?"

"Well, anything, of course, but what do you say to faro?"

"Is there a faro bank running here?"

"Oh, yes, but I don't mean the regular banks. I mean a game between ourselves."

"Ah! Got an outfit?"

"Yes. It's in my room."

"Well, I don't know but I'll play a stack or two against you. When shall it be?"

"Now, if you like."

"All right."

They had been sitting on a hotel piazza. At this they both arose, but Preble hesitated.

"Do you object to one other man in the game?" he asked.

"Not if he's all right," Nick replied.

"Oh, sure! you see, there's a gentleman here who feels

just as you do. He hates to play in a crowd. We were speaking of a quiet deal at faro last evening, and he said that if there was one other man to go in he'd like to play."

"Well, hunt him up, and tell him you've found the other man."

"I will. If you'll wait here a few minutes I think I can find him."

"Go ahead."

Nick sat down again, and Preble hurried away. There was a quiet smile on the detective's face as he waited. He knew pretty well who the other man would be, and he knew that the "quiet game" would be played in such a way as to make it impossible for anybody but Preble to win.

"He thinks he's caught a sucker," chuckled Nick, "and that between him and his partner there'll be a good rake off."

In less than a minute Preble returned, bringing with him the man who had stood at his side when Nick went up to the roulette table.

"I didn't get your name," said Preble.

"Whittaker," responded Nick.

"Ah! my name is Preble, Mr. Whittaker, and this is Mr. Taylor, the gentleman I told you about."

Nick and Taylor shook hands. The detective had thought of it before, but he was struck again by the fact that these swindlers used their right names.

"They feel pretty safe," he reflected, "for they have worked their game so that the law seems to be on their side."

"If you're ready," Preble began.

"Lead on," said Nick.

They went to a room in the hotel where Preble opened a trunk and brought out a roll of oilcloth. He unrolled this, and laid it on a table. On it were painted the cards and other marks of a faro layout. Preble also produced a deal box and several packs of cards. He asked Nick to select a pack, and the detective did so.

"I suppose I'm to be the bank," said Preble.

"Yes," responded Nick. "Any limit?"

The question seemed to startle the swindler a little. Apparently he had caught a bigger sucker than he had thought.

"Well," he said, "if that's your game, Mr. Whittaker, I'll have to stand it."

"All right," remarked Nick coolly, "no limit."

"Hold on, though!" exclaimed Preble. "I don't know that I do want to go quite so far. Suppose we say five thousand dollars? That's high enough, isn't it?"

"I'm satisfied."

"Suits me," added Taylor; and the game began.

Nick always went supplied with plenty of money; but, unless he was going on a very long journey, he never took more than five thousand dollars in cash at a time; and that amount, with his morning's winnings, was just about what he had with him then.

"You'll show that you're good for it, I suppose?" he suggested quietly, before the deal.

"Certainly," replied Preble, and he flashed a big wad of bills, saying:

"Will you count them?"

"No," answered Nick, "not until I win them," and he laughed good-humoredly.

Preble smiled, but it was plain that he was uneasy. His hands trembled at first as he shuffled the cards, but by the time he had put them in the box, he was perfectly cool.

"It looks to me," thought Nick, "as if Preble was getting down to rock bottom. He needs money, and he's bound to get away with mine. That makes him excited. Well, we'll see if he can play a crooked game without making a slip."

Nick bought a stack of twenty chips at one hundred dollars each, and Taylor did the same.

The detective began by placing all his chips on the table in four bets of five hundred dollars each.

The room was very still.

Both Taylor and Preble seemed to be holding their breath.

"Do you want to bet on the first turn?" asked Preble, addressing Taylor.

Taylor's response was to put one chip on the high card. Preble pushed two cards out of the box. A king came first, a four spot second, and Taylor lost. None of Nick's bets were decided by the turn. One of his bets was on the jack.

Taylor continued to bet on the high card, increasing his stake a chip every time he lost. He kept about even.

At the fifth turn a jack showed second.

Nick had won, and Preble pushed five chips beside those already on that card. Nick let them stay there, thus doubling his bet.

On the very next turn a jack showed first, but a ten spot was second, and, as Nick had a bet on that card, he lost one and won the other, thus coming out where he started.

So it went through the deal, and at the end Nick was five hundred dolars ahead and Taylor five hundred out. Preble, therefore, had neither lost nor won.

"I'm on now," thought the detective, while the cards were being shuffled. "Taylor will lose steadily. That will be for the purpose of blinding me. I will be allowed to win for a while, and then they'll soak me."

The second deal seemed to show that Nick was right. He had won three thousand dollars, and Taylor had lost what he started with, and he bought another thousand dollars worth of chips.

Before beginning the third deal Preble struck a bell. In answer to it a young Indian came in.

"Let's have whisky, Penola," said Preble.

The Indian brought a bottle, and poured a glass for each man.

"Here's how," said Preble, draining his glass at a single gulp.

"How," responded Taylor, doing likewise.

The detective nodded, raised his glass to his lips, pretending to take a swallow, and set it down.

As a fact, not a drop touched the detective's tongue, for he suspected that the Indian had drugged the liquor. But he smacked his lips and remarked:

"Good liquor, gentlemen."

"Yes," said Preble, "twenty years old. Drink hearty."

"I like a little at a time," said Nick, as he placed a big bet on the table.

The Indian stayed in the room, watching the game from a little distance.

It was plain to Nick's keen eyes that Preble meant to do him up on this deal. Probably he had hoped that the liquor would stupify his victim and make the work

easier. When it got to the last turn, Taylor had lost all his chips and had stopped playing.

"The game is too steep for me," he said, with a laugh.

Nick was down to the two thousand with which he had started. He took the rest of his money out of his pocket, counted out three thousand dollars, and placed the bills underneath his chips on the king. Then he put a one-cent piece on top of the stack.

"I bet the limit," he remarked quietly, "that the king loses," which meant that he bet that the first card to show from the box would be a king.

He saw Preble draw a deep, silent breath, and press his lips hard together.

"That goes," he said huskily.

He put his right hand on the deal box and began to draw off the top card.

On the instant Nick's arm shot out. He did not hit the swindler. Instead he raised his arm and brought it down swiftly, and as it descended there was the flash of a dagger below his hand.

The sharp-pointed blade was driver through the cuff of Preble's coat sleeve, and into the table. The steel grazed the swindler's wrist, but did not draw blood. As a result of the strange blow, Preble's hand was pinned to the place where it lay. He could not draw it away without tearing his coat sleeve, and for an instant he was too astonished to do so.

That instant was enough for the detective. He pulled up the fingers that held the card just being pushed from the box. Instead of a single card, two dropped to the table. The one that should have come first was a king.

In the next instant the detective yanked the knife from the table, pushed back Preble's sleeve, and showed a card there that the swindler had meant to substitute for the king. That would have made it appear that the king came second, and thus Nick's five-thousand-dollar bet would have been lost.

It takes a great deal longer to tell about this than it did to do it. All was done as in one flash.

"My knife!" gasped the Indian.

It was Penola's dagger that Nick had used to expose Preble's trick.

Both Taylor and Preble were too startled in that first instant to stir. Then, as Nick drew back, Taylor leaped to his feet and his hand reached for his hip pocket.

CHAPTER VI.

COUNTESS TELKA.

Preble was pushing his chair back from the table, and his hand, too, was reaching for his hip pocket.

Before either of them could draw a weapon, the detective's revolver was moving swiftly but steadily from one to the other.

"It won't do, gentlemen and redskin," said he coolly; "I've got the drop on all of you, and, by Jove! I'll shoot if you give me any cause to do so."

They saw business in Nick's stern eyes, and every one of them stood still.

Preble muttered a hoarse oath.

"You do business quick," he said.

"It's a way they have where I came from," replied Nick. "We won't waste any more time about the rest of it, either. Ante up five thousand to meet my bet."

"I only meant to play a joke——"

"Ante up and shut up!"

Preble pressed his lips together, and slowly took five thousand dollars from the pile in front of him and placed the money beside Nick's bet.

"Now cash in my chips," demanded the detective.

The swindler glanced at Taylor. The latter was deathly pale, and his eyes were fixed in Nick's direction. But he was not looking at the detective. He was seeing something just beyond.

Nick perceived this, and, quickly slipping his revolver into his left hand and holding it so that Preble and Taylor were covered by it, he swept his right hand suddenly around behind him.

His doubled fist caught Penola with terrific force on the jaw. The Indian, who had been a little behind the detective, had been creeping stealthily up, meaning to strike Nick down.

With a howl of surprise and pain, Penola stumbled across the room and brought up against the wall. The detective did not even glance at him.

"I told you it wouldn't do," he remarked. "You men know that if I should tell of this——"

"For Heaven's sake don't expose us!" exclaimed Preble; "I'll square up."

"I was going to say," continued Nick, quietly but sternly, "that if I should speak of this, you two would be run out of Palm Beach and you'd never be allowed to play here again. But I don't want any more trouble with you. I give you till to-morrow morning to get out. If you're here then I'll expose you. Ante up, now!"

Preble counted out the required money, and Nick tucked it in his pockets. Then he backed to the door, keeping his revolver up all the time, and went out.

"Now," he thought, as he went down the hallway, "that rascally pair will have to get out. They're almost broke, and they'll have to raise money somehow. Whatever their game is, I'll spot them and check them."

It will be understood that Nick did not want to expose the swindlers at Palm Beach. That would not prevent them from cheating poor farmers again. It was necessary to catch them in some crime, and, now that they had little money left, the detective was sure that they would return to swindling. He went to his room and wrote a letter to Chick.

"Foster paid Preble four thousand dollars for his swamp lands," he wrote, "and he lost more than that in travel and other misfortunes. I have just collected five thousand dollars from Preble at his private faro bank, and this morning I touched the wheel for six hundred dollars more. Those two sums together will just about make Foster even. So I want you to go to Worcester with him, buy back his old farm, or get him a new one, and set him up as well as you can. It will be a good plan to buy a farm for about four thousand dollars, and give the balance to Foster to make a start with."

When he had written his letter, Nick disguised himself thoroughly and went back to the gambling hall. There was a great crowd there, and it was thickest around the table where he had played in the morning. Countess Telka was still there, and it seemed that she was having a run of luck. She was no longer betting a single gold piece at a time, but she was laying them down by the handful. In front of her was a great pile of chips and money that she had won so far. At almost every turn she added to the pile, and scattered her bets all over the board, so that some of them were lost each

time, but her winnings generally went far ahead of her losses.

Among those who were looking on were Preble and Taylor. Both were scowling and silent. Nick took his place directly behind them, and after a few turns Preble's hand went to his pocket, and he drew forth a bill.

"Don't!" whispered Taylor; "what's the use? this isn't a lucky day for us."

"Right," growled Preble, putting the money away. "Hang that man Whittaker!" he added fiercely. "I never dreamed he was a professional gambler."

"That's what he is, all right," said Taylor. "He beat us out neatly."

"I should say so! we haven't got a thousand left between us."

"I know it. We've got to do something."

"Well?"

"What's the matter with getting more fleece?"

Preble did not answer for a moment. The detective understood what "fleece" meant. Taylor was suggesting that they sell more worthless swamp land to Northern farmers.

"I suppose we shall have to," grumbled Preble, after a moment, "but it takes so long to raise anything that way."

"Not more than a month or six weeks, and it's dead sure."

"That's so."

"And we've got just about capital enough to make the play with."

"To say nothing of Whittaker's threat to drive us from the beach."

"I wonder if he meant it?"

"Undoubtedly. I never saw a man who meant business as much as he did."

There was another moment of silence, for attention was again attracted by Countess Telka. The old woman had begun to play the limit.

"Pressing her luck with a vengeance!" muttered Preble beneath his breath.

Countess Telka's play was so interesting that almost everybody else at the table stopped betting.

"Make your bets," called the croupier, and the countess was the only one who put down anything.

For three turns of the wheel she lost all she put down. Then she bet the limit in several different ways on one number, the twenty-three. She played the number flat for one limit; then she put the limit on the column in which the number appeared; and she bet the limit also on the odd and the color. It took all the gold coin she had in her bag, but she did not touch any of the money or chips that she had won.

"That means," whispered Preble excitedly, "that she'll stop on this play whether she wins or loses."

"Make your bets," called the croupier.

Nobody stirred. The marble was set whirring. It began to jump.

"Nothing more goes," said the croupier.

Somebody coughed.

"Keep still!" exclaimed a man angrily.

The onlookers were so excited that the least noise rattled them. Down went the marble at last. There was a chorus of long breaths from the crowd, and the croupier called:

"Twenty-three, red, second dozen, middle column."

Countess Telka had won every bet! She folded her hands and waited. Not a muscle of her face moved. The croupier counted her coins and made a calculation, figuring the winnings with a pencil and paper.

"Thirty-five thousand and five hundred dollars," said he, with a glance at the old woman.

"Right," she replied.

The croupier turned to the rack of chips and the money drawer. He counted out several thousand dollars in chips and several thousand more in cash. Then he shrugged his shoulders and touched a bell. A half-whispered cry went up from the crowd:

"She has broken the bank!"

It was indeed so, but Countess Telka never moved. She stood with folded hands until a messenger was sent to the office of the company that ran the gambling hall. It took but a few minutes, and when the messenger returned, he brought enough cash to settle with her. The woman stowed it in her bag, and moved slowly away, while the croupier stacked up the chips that had been in use. The game was at an end at that table for the day. For it is a rule of the place that when the bank has been broken there shall be no more play at the unlucky table until the next day.

Nick watched the scene with the greatest interest. He had witnessed heavy gambling before, but nothing quite as striking as this richly dressed old woman, who played and won as if the result meant nothing to her.

"She's as cold-blooded as they make them," thought Nick.

But he was equally interested in Preble and Taylor, over whom he kept the sharpest watch. The swindlers stood at the table until Countess Telka had been paid. As she started away, Nick saw Taylor clutch Preble suddenly by the sleeve and whisper to him. Preble started and his eyes rested a second upon the old woman and her money bag. Then he lowered his head, and both swindlers walked rapidly away.

"Ah!" said Nick to himself, "there's more than one way to raise the wind. It may not be necessary to go North for fleece, eh? So that's it! Well, well; we'll see." And with this thought, he, too, left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

PENOLA'S DIRTY WORK.

It was now evening. Most of those who had been in the gambling hall all day went to the various hotels for dinner.

Nick found the hotel where Countess Telka stayed, and then had a private conversation with the proprietor.

"I have reason to believe," Nick said to him, "that one of your guests will be robbed to-night, and I would like to be allowed to prevent it."

"Well!" exclaimed the landlord, "I should be very glad if you would. Who is the intended victim?"

"Countess Telka."

"Indeed! I hear she broke the bank."

"Yes, and she keeps her money with her, doesn't she?"

"Every dollar. I have advised her to put it in our safe, but she won't listen to me."

"Does anybody occupy the room next to hers?"

"I'll see."

The landlord looked up his books, and reported that one of the rooms next that of the countess was empty.

"Then I'll take it," said Nick. "Is there a door between the two rooms?"

"No.

"I hope you won't object if I make one."

"No," said the landlord doubtfully, "but wouldn't it be just as well if you should warn the countess?"

"Not quite. I have special reason for wishing to catch the robbers in the act. And whatever happens I don't want it whispered that I have been here."

"All right, Mr. Carter; do as you please."

Nick obtained some carpenter's tools, and had them taken secretly to the room next that of the countess.

While she was at dinner he cut an opening through the wooden partition between his room and the clothes closet of hers. This did not take long, for all he had to do was to remove a board, thus leaving a hole large enough for him to squeeze through, and when the task was finished he replaced the board so that it would look from inside the closet as if nothing had happened. Then Nick went to the dining room. Countess Telka was there, but neither Preble nor Taylor were in sight.

The detective kept his eyes on the countess all through the evening, fearing that an attempt might be made to steal her money bag before she went to bed. Nothing of that sort happened, however, and not once did he see either of the swindlers.

It was not until after midnight that the gambling hall was closed, and the hotel became quiet; and it was not till then that Countess Telka went to her room. At that time the detective took his place in his own room, and waited, listening. After an hour had passed he softly removed the board that he had cut away, and got into the closet. The door opening into Countess Telka's chamber was closed and he opened it a crack.

Her room was at the rear of the hotel, and one story from the ground.

There was a lawn on that side about a hundred yards across. It ended at a grove.

Looking through the partly opened door, Nick saw that the countess had left her window wide open. Her heavy breathing assured him that she was sound asleep.

Another long hour passed. The detective kept his eyes fixed upon the window. It was almost pitch dark in the chamber, and it was but little lighter outside.

At last, without any sound whatever, he saw a dark spot appear on the space just above the window sill. It was a man's head. The detective could distinguish nothing more than the outline, but he could see that the man had no hat on.

"One of them," he thought, "is on the other's shoulders. I hope it's Preble who is going to climb into the room."

If that should prove to be the case, Nick's work would be finished quickly and easily. Preble would be caught in the act of robbery. That would mean a long term in prison, and would stop the swindling operations, for it was very clear that Preble was the leader, and that Taylor could not do much, if anything, without him.

For a full minute the head stayed where it was, perfectly motionless. Then it rose slowly, the shoulders came into view, and hands were laid on the window sill.

The countess slept on, and there was no reason why she should not, for the robber made no noise. Little by little he came higher, until he bent far over and placed his hands on the floor. He lay across the window without moving, and during that time the detective heard a faint sound from outside. Somebody seemed to be creeping away. It was a very slight noise, but it was enough to show that the man or men who had helped the robber up to the window were going away. He was to do his work unaided.

Presently the robber began to squirm across the window sill. He worked very slowly, trying evidently to make no noise. At last he was entirely in the room, and he remained on his hands and knees for several seconds without stirring.

Nick pushed the closet door a little farther open. He could not see the robber now, for the man was below the level of the window sill, and therefore in deep shadow. But, softly as a cat, the robber was creeping across the room. There was at length a faint rustling from the direction of the bed, and Nick knew that the robber was beginning to pull the bag of money from under the pillow.

"Skillful work!" thought the detective.

He noticed that the countess breathed as steadily as before, thus showing that she was not disturbed.

It was important as evidence to catch the robber with the money actually in his hands. So the detective waited until the rustling ceased. The robber was going back to the window. He moved softly, but not as softly as at first. His success had made him confident, and now he was hurrying. Nevertheless, he made almost no noise, but there was enough for the detective to hear.

At that moment, therefore, Nick threw open the closet door and with one leap came upon the man in the darkness. The detective himself made as little noise as possible, and the man he attacked did not utter a cry. For less than a second there was a struggle. The money bag dropped to the floor, wrenched from the robber's hand by the detective. Then Nick did a strange thing: He picked the man up, carried him in two strides to the window, and threw him out.

Thud! went the man's body on the turf, and by that time Nick was back in the closet and squeezing through the opening he had made into his own room.

By that time the Countess Telka was awake and screaming like mad. She scrambled from bed and pushed a button on the wall to alarm the night clerk.

"Thieves!" she was crying, "robbers! my money! my money!"

As Nick was hurriedly replacing the board he had cut from the partition, he saw a ray of light. The countess had turned on the light in her room. Then he heard her choking and sobbing with relief. She had found her money bag on the floor.

"Safe! safe!" she stammered over and over.

There were hurried footsteps in the hall, and a knock at the door of the countess.

"What is the trouble?" asked a voice.

"There's been a robber in my room," replied the countess. "Wait a moment."

She hurriedly threw on a wrapper, and let the clerk in. Nick was changing his diguise, which he did quickly, and, while the clerk was talking with the countess, the detective walked quietly down to the office.

A number of persons had been aroused by the screams. Some of them were going through the hall, others came down to the office to find what was the matter. Among them was the landlord. He came in, looking all around inquiringly. Nick went up to him and spoke in a low tone.

"I'm the man you're looking for."

The landlord stared.

"I don't know you," he responded.

"I am Carter. Let's go into your private room."

The landlord could hardly believe his ears, but he led the way, and soon they were where they could talk freely. Nick removed a part of his disguise to show who he was.

"The robbery has been prevented," Nick said.

"But did you catch the robber?"

"I didn't try to."

"Didn't try!"

"No. The man who entered the room to steal the money was not the man I wanted to catch. The real robber had another man to do his dirty work for him. So I let him go."

"But was that right, Mr. Carter?"

"You may be very sure it was. The men who planned this robbery won't be seen here again very soon, and if I succeed with the rest of my plan they'll never turn up again. I have driven them away, and as I know pretty well where they'll go, I shall follow them up and catch them in crime."

"But what shall I say——"

"Why! let it be understood, if you like, that the robber got into the room through a hole in the partition."

"The one you made?"

"Certainly. The Countess Telka will find it. Meantime, I have disappeared, for nobody will know me in this disguise, and by the first train that leaves this morning I shall start for New York."

"Well, I suppose you know best. Ah! there's the countess in the office. I must see what she wants."

The countess wanted to put her money in the safe. She told excitedly about finding that a hole had been cut through the partition, and Nick stood by listening. He was satisfied that everybody would think the robbery had been attempted by the man in the next room; that would make it sure that Preble and Taylor could get away.

"It's important that they should escape," said Nick to himself, "for I must catch them in crime. It won't do any good to capture Penola, for he wouldn't confess that they told him to do the stealing. And if they read in the papers that a man in the hotel is suspected, they'll think they're safe."

Nick had done this reasoning on the instant when he attacked the robber in the Countess Telka's room.

Putting his hand to the man's face, he had felt that it was neither Preble nor Taylor. He felt the Indian's high cheek bones, felt his coarse hair, and knew that he had hold of Penola. So, planning his action like a flash, he had thrown the Indian out of the window.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUDDEN TURN OF ADVENTURE.

Nick Carter, intending to return to New York to complete the case which he had prepared against the fake land agency, was given another proof of the truth of the old adage: "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley."

He was well under way on the journey to the metropolis, feeling that he had done well in his endeavors. Yet there was still a lot to accomplish before he could devote his whole attention and strength to another case, and one far more enticing in its mystery.

"I must not lose a minute," he told himself, "and when I get a good opportunity up there in New York I will turn the tables on a number of people who have ridiculed me lately for taking cases which do not yield such an enormous fee for reward. They can't understand the fact that I take a pride in my art, and that there are other things in the world beside money. But this big treasury case will enable me to do a good turn for Uncle Sam and draw a comfortable sum, which will do good if I spend it right. Let me see, now——"

Then his active mind flitted from hither to yon, as he planned the work before him.

His meditations were rudely interrupted, and in a most curious manner. His attention was drawn to a rough-looking passenger who had the seat directly in front of him on the train. This man had been very quiet and had hardly looked up when Nick entered the car. But without warning, except a quick gesture of rising which had drawn the detective's alertness from the temporary brooding spell, this worthy whipped out a revolver and began shooting in the direction of an elderly man on the other side of the aisle.

The old man gave a groan as one of the bullets struck him, and the burly fellow chuckled.

"I got ye that time."

This was his ejaculation which came to the detective's ears. The other passengers seemed dazed, and no one stirred or raised a hand, watching the awful scene with frozen expressions of horror. Indeed, so quickly had the fusillade begun that it was but natural, for it takes a tremendous nervous quickness to act in a case of great fright.

Nick Carter acted, however, for he had been used to scenes of this nature. He shrewdly judged from the lurch of the old man who had been made the target that the bullet had struck in his shoulder instead of some vital part.

Nick determined, in the twinkling of an eye, to stop the assailant before more harm was done, even though at the cost of his own safety. He reached forward swiftly just as the burly man was swinging the weapon back with a grand flourish for another shot.

Carter's iron grip closed in about the big fellow's muscular wrist, and the revolver shot through the air. It took one sudden jolt to break the grip, and at the same instant Nick had painfully wrenched the rascal's arm and wrist in such a way that the fellow was jerked backward over the seat. Another quick move and the detective held the fellow in such a way that it was little trouble to swing the nippers upon his wrists.

The passengers now hustled to his aid—after seeing the man disarmed and shackled. They were very brave now, indeed. Each man began to tell the detective exactly what to do and how to do it. But Carter was not wasting time.

"Here, hold this scoundrel, and don't let him get away. Cover him with his own revolver and shoot some of his villainy out of his head if he makes a move against you."

A young farmer grasped the weapon, and, pointing it at the man's breast instead of his head, showed that he meant to carry out the detective's command in the spirit, if not in the letter.

"Now, for the old gentleman," said Nick Carter, as he hustled to the aid of the injured passenger. It was high time that he did so, for blood was running freely from the old man's arm and coat sleeve, which hung over the side of the car seat.

It was lucky for the old man that Carter was there.

For probably not another person in the car knew how to give "first aid to the injured" so well as the great sleuth, if they knew at all, which was more than doubtful. Nick hastily slipped the weakening old fellow's coat from his shoulders.

"Ah, a bad bullet wound!" exclaimed Nick Carter.

"Can't I help," said a pretty young woman, who hurried up. "Here, I will tear off some of my skirt, and we can stanch the flow of blood."

Carter thanked her. But he knew that more than stanching the wound was necessary in this case.

"The bullet struck an artery, I believe. I will have to make a tourniquet," declared the detective. "Some one hold the gentleman up in a sitting position, so that I may attend to his shoulder better—it will keep the blood from flowing too easily as well."

Nick hastily twisted part of the proffered white cloth around the old gentleman's arm after he had slit the shirt sleeve clear up with his sharp pocketknife. Twisting this around, and then slipping a lead pencil through the little double knot, Nick forced the cloth to grip tighter and tighter about the injured man's arm.

The old man was so weak that he was barely conscious. Nick knew too much of the weakness of his heart by asking him questions at such a trying moment.

"Here, neighbors, if you help me arrange a sort of couch by turning one seat backward, and stacking up this baggage in the space between the seats, you will do a good act."

With these words Carter lifted the old gentleman over against the seat and assisted him to recline in an easier position, all the time gripping firmly on the tourniquet to prevent any loosening on the flow of blood from the severed artery. Nick felt as best he could in the arm, and then he gave a sigh of relief.

"Friends," Nick said, "fortunately the bullet that struck this gentleman has not remained imbedded in the flesh. There will not have to be probing. But one thing is certain, the old gentleman must be given immediate medical attention, and must be taken off this train, else his life will not be worth a penny! The vibration of the cars, and the fact that this train will not have a Pullman sleeper on it for another sixty miles means that he will be jolted to death. A rest of a day or two at some little way station will mean saving his life."

The passengers talked among themselves, but none of them seemed to have any suggestions to make. The conductor had returned from the front of the train and he was so wild with excitement that he was worse than no assistance whatever.

"Oh, my; oh, my; oh, my!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together helplessly, and in a manner which at any other less serious moment would have seemed intensely amusing to the observant detective. "Here another terrible crime on my train. I've had a wreck, a robbery, a fire, and several fights on my runs during the last two months, and my job isn't worth a bad Mexican penny now. It's just my luck!"

Goodness knows how long he would have rambled along this way had not Carter sternly asked him:

"What do we care about your luck? Haven't you enough sense to try to help me prevent this man from dying on the train? Where is the next station? How many minutes from here?"

The conductor gulped, and tried to look important. But the withering glance of scorn which he received from Nick Carter's stern eyes destroyed all his vanity.

"Oh—I'm so worried, I'll lose my job—but I'll help. I'll do what I can. There's a town about ten miles farther on. It ain't no regular stop for this train, though. No, it ain't no stop."

"What's the name of the town?" asked Carter quickly. "How many people there?"

"About a thousand, I guess. It's Greenvile Center."

"Then you just pull the bell cord and we'll stop there long enough to take off this old gentleman and give him the care which is necessary to save his life."

The conductor looked obdurate.

"It's against the rules."

"Never you mind that, conductor. I'll write in a report and let your officers know that it was an unusual case, and that will fix it all right for you. Do you know who this would-be murderer can be?"

The excitement of saving the old man's life had temporarily drawn the attention of the passengers and the conductor from the prisoner, who, under the faithful guard of the young countryman, seemed to have sunk down into a sullen fit of depression.

At Nick Carter's words, however, his eyes flashed ominously, and he looked straight into the conductor's eyes. The conductor's face paled, and he stammered.

"I—I—I never saw him before."

Nick was watching the conductor intently, and studying each flitting indication of thought; here, he thought, might be a clew. And when he beheld the curious manner of the train official, his suspicions were aroused.

"You lie!"

The sudden accusation shot forth from Nick's lips as he beheld a mysterious half smile of triumph on the features of the murderous man in the handcuffs.

The conductor whirled about angrily, and confronted his accuser stoutly. He raised his hand as though about to strike the detective, but he found himself looking into the barrel of a revolver close against his face.

Nick had drawn the weapon with his left hand, not relaxing his grip upon the tourniquet under his elderly patient's arm. The conductor stepped back.

"I say you lie. You know that rascal, and I am going to make a report to the management of the railroad that you have a connection with this bloody deed," said Nick. "Don't try to strike me, for you are fooling with a dangerous subject now, and you shall pay the penalty unless you aid the law."

The conductor stood in the aisle of the car, and trembled with fright. He was so overwhelmed that he had to brace himself against the backs of seats on either side to keep from falling. The passengers stood there, awestruck by the queer drama being enacted before them.

"Who are you?" almost whispered the conductor. "What right have you to order me this way?"

"You will discover my identity if you refuse to act reasonably," replied Nick Carter. "I suspect a little foul work here, in which you are apt to be drawn. And, I'll tell you frankly, I am in a position to handle the matter."

The conductor braced himself and looked intently at Nick. Then his eyes dropped, and he glanced at the face of the old man. It was his first close look. In the excitement of the affair—and it had all been pro-

gressing in much more rapid time than it takes to recount the details—he had not looked very intently. Now he gave an exclamation of surprise, which still further aroused Nick's keen thoughts and suspicions.

"Great Scott! They got him!"

The detective stepped forward to lift the old man up, lowering the revolver, in order to support the wounded victim a little more firmly. The old fellow's eyes opened, and they settled on the conductor in a dazed manner. There was a flicker of intelligence, and his lips moved inaudibly. Nick bent over to catch the words he was saying if possible.

The old man looked in a friendly way at the conductor, and Nick caught the words:

"It ain't your fault, Bob; it ain't—— Samuels, he——"

Then the old fellow's eyes closed and his head bobbed forward limply—for he was unconscious again.

Nick looked at the conductor.

"What's your first name?"

"Bob!"

It was hardly said above a breath. But Nick Carter had caught his clew. For the words of the old man had been heard by no one but himself. He straightened up, and pointed the revolver back at the prisoner, merely as a gesture, his eyes burning into those of the conductor's like coals of fire.

"Bob!" roared Nick. "It's your fault. Yours and Samuels'—and if this old man's life goes, you'll both swing for it! Do you hear? You and Samuels together!"

The conductor staggered as though he had been struck a blow, and Nick saw that his words had the effect of unnerving him as desired. Nick was working a little "third-degree" police method.

The man in the handcuffs started as though he had received an electric shock.

"You squealer, Bob Naley! You'll get yourn!" he cried.

Things were happening thick and fast, and yet Nick could not get the drift of it. He was like a splendid swimmer who is tossed here and there by whirlpools and eddies in some terrific stream, yet who keeps striking out bravely, to keep above water and eventually strike a saving current.

As the man spoke he suddenly shot up his fist against the revolver which the young man was holding against his breast. It happened just at an instant when his guard was looking toward Nick and the group around the other interested party, the conductor. Another quick blow, and the manacled hands, with terrible power, shot against the young farmer's face.

"Huh! Take that!" grunted the man.

"Oh!" and the young fellow sank down with a moan, for the blow, hardened by the metal bands of the handcuffs, brought shrewdly into play, had been a bitter one.

The assailant, springing up, was just on the point of leaping through the window, when Nick Carter, with nerves as steady as Toledo steel, drew a quick bead on the felow's legs, with his weapon in the left hand.

Bang!

The leap for freedom, daring as it would have been, never transpired, for the detective had sent a leaden messenger to intercept it. Nick's aim had never been better in his life. He gave just the shot he most desired, a flesh wound, zipping along the edge of the man's muscular calf.

"Now, you'd better sit back in your seat, or I'll have to perform another operation!" declared Nick Carter calmly.

The passengers shrank away from him. They regarded him as some supernatural being, for he had been so mysteriously quick with each turn of the case. And a liberal display of gunpowder smoke is apt to make the most courageous of passengers, even in the notably courageous South, sit back a little from the activity.

"Young lady, will you hold this gentleman's tourniquet so that he will not lose any more blood?"

The pretty girl quietly obeyed, indicating her willingness with a simple nod.

"She's a gritty one," thought Nick.

"Now, conductor, brace up," said the detective. "Step up to the other end of the car for a word with me."

They stepped up as he indicated, the conductor trembling and acting in a curiously frightened manner, which, to save his life, Nick could not associate with a man who was in league with a murderer. Nick began to believe that perhaps there were different circumstances from what at first appeared.

"Well, now," he began, in a low voice, as he gripped the arm of the conductor firmly. "If you tell the truth, you will not get into trouble;" and looking back Nick saw that the farmer was again on guard, with a bruised but very determined face. The prisoner was groaning over what Nick knew to be a painful flesh wound, but nothing worse.

"Tell it all, and if you are on the square you'll have no better friend than Nick Carter!"

The words acted like magic, although they were uttered in the lowest whisper of the detective's voice.

"Are you Nick Carter, the great New York detective?" gaspd the conductor, straightening up. He seemed to be revived in some stranger manner, and a sparkle came to his eyes once more. "Are you?"

Nick nodded.

"I am. I am deciding whether to go on to the terminal of this division and put you in prison, or help you. So you see I don't mind letting you know my identity."

The conductor had regained some spirit, however, by this time, and his glance did not drop. He took out some tickets and pretended to be fumbling with them.

Nick wondered at this, but in a low voice, and very cautiously, the man began a story which explained it, as well as several other things which the detective wished to know.

"I'll tell you quickly," muttered the conductor. "I am a marked man all right, for that is Samuels, the leader of a gang of mountain bandits, lumber thieves, and bad eggs in general, who will hound me to my dying day."

"Don't mind that so much," Nick answered softly, "those things are not nearly as bad as some people think. I have landed thousands of desperadoes behind the bars for periods of from one week to life—and the evergreen shore. Yet none of them have killed me yet, and I've never been haunted. What has this man against the old fellow?"

"I don't know. That is old man Greenbrier, one of the finest old fellows in the world. Everybody loves him in this section, and I thought that even Samuels' gangsters would not harm a hair of his head."

Nick looked at the conductor intently.

"But did you know that he whispered: 'It's not your fault, Bob?'"

"No—what on earth could that have meant?" asked the conductor in astonishment. "I swear to you on my honor as a man that I am absolutely innocent of connection with these men. But my train goes through their section every day—they have a mountain settlement about ten miles back in the country from Greenville Center. They would kill me, and even wreck this train with ease. I am afraid to testify against them. This Samuels told me that he had nothing against me—this was one time before, when I knew of their killing a man, but did not witness it. Yet Samuels told me that if I ever breathed a word against him or them, he'd get me."

As if by a wireless message, Samuels, the prisoner back in the car, yelled out in a fury of pain and anger just at this moment:

"I'll git ye, Bob, fer this low-hound trick of squealin' —er my men will. An' what's more, I'll git old Greenbrier, an' I'll git that cuss that stopped me. I alluz keeps my word, an' thar ain't enough men in Virginny ter keep me from keepin' it, and thar ain't enough jails in Dixie ter keep me inside when I wants ter git outside."

"Will you get off the train on your trip back this way if I stay at Greenville Center to investigate this?" asked Nick.

"Golly, Nick Carter working on a little Virginia shooting scrape? Why, there ain't no money in this—although I'll sure do my best if I can only save my skin."

"That's all I want," said Nick Carter. "I'll attend to the rest. I don't have to be in New York for forty-eight hours, and I'm willing to do a little man hunting down here."

The details were arranged. The conductor and Nick took the names and addresses of the passengers as witnesses from those who had the courage to give them.

It developed that the young farmer lived in Greenville Center, and that the young woman was going to visit some relatives who lived three miles out of the town. They had intended getting off the train at Bell's Junction, fifteen miles farther on, a regular through-train stop, but they availed themselves of this chance to save time. And the gritty girl insisted on giving some assistance to the injured old man, while the farmer was as mad as could be imagined. "I'm going to hang to this fellow. He looks mighty familiar to me, and I'm going to see him landed in jail."

Nick thought to himself:

"Well, if this criminal can be as powerful as the conductor says, hereabouts, and yet not be known to a resident of a town ten miles from his rendezvous—if he can shoot down in cold blood a well-beloved old man—if he can threaten me as he did, then it looks like good sport around this peaceful community for the next day. I think I'll not be bothered by the birds building nests in my hat!"

And Nick Carter made a very good guess about the amount of activity which would ensue after he disembarked with the others in peaceful Greenville.

CHAPTER IX.

'A MOUNTAIN FEUD.'

At the conductor's signal the train slowed down at the little way station of Greenville Center, and Nick and the others of the party disembarked, carrying the old gentleman gently down the car steps, and resting him as easily as possible on the long, wheeled truck which the station master had fortunately left standing outside before he went to his dinner.

It was midday, and all was quiet along the streets of Greenville Center. The place was like a thousand other such little communities: low, rambling, and more or less rickety houses scattered along a shady thoroughfare, which in turn was criss-crossed by three or four lanes, which were all carefully named by the local authorities to make the village as citified as possible.

A settlement of great simplicity, no throngs of pedestrians pattered along the brick sidewalks of Main Street. Even the yellow dogs seemed to be at home for the midday meal.

"Well, I'm surprised that the village sports are not down to see the train come in," said Nick Carter, with a twinkle in his eye. "They don't do things as stylishly here as they do in most towns."

The young countryman laughed. He saw the humor of it, for at every Southern, Western, Northern, and Eastern depot in the small towns it is a national custom for the idlers and even the business people in certain places to go see the train go past, to wonder who this man can be, and to make wiseacre comments on the fashions, manners, and other details of the passengers who disembark or travel past.

One solitary figure approached them on the run from a house near the station.

"Who's this?" asked Carter.

"Oh, that's Si Stebbins, the village constable. He'll be on the trail, for he knows something's wrong for the through train to stop at this time of day. The folks here didn't expect it, or you can bet they would have been right down to see that the train was run right."

"Oh, do be careful of this poor old gentleman," said the pretty girl, who was more concerned about the suffering victim than anything else. "He's so white and weak. I'm afraid he has no chance."

"I hope he hasn't, old dog!" hissed Samuels, who had been keeping a sullen silence.

"Shut up!"

Nick Carter's jaw's clicked with determination as he faced the brutal rascal. The man dropped his gaze, for he caught the glaring glance of a master of men, and he knew that this was no time to assert himself against his captor.

"Hy, thar, what's this yere disturbance?" cried the constable, with his highly polished star in evidence on the right side of his flannel shirt. "Whatche doin' yere with that man in the clampers?"

"I'll explain," began Nick, but he was interrupted, for the constable, on closer view, recognized Samuels.

"Gol ding my cats!"

"What's the matter, do you know him?" asked Nick.

"Know him? Why he's the wust crook in this yere State of Virginny, an' I've been layin' fer him this three year! At last my chanct has come, an' lemme tell ye, I'm glad ter git hold of Samuels!" cried the constable, laboring under terrific excitement. "Why, this feller, he

killed a man in Red Kelly's saloon an' got away up country, and thar ain't been hide nor ha'r of 'im seed since. Gol ding my cats!"

The constable was starting toward the prisoner, as if to pounce on him, like a cat on a rat which has long been out of reach, when he suddenly recognized the young man with the revolver.

This youth stood guard resolutely, heeding little else but the actions of his prisoner. His bruised face was enough to make him determined to prevent any further activity.

"Why, Hennery, what ye doin' yere with that thar shootin' iron? I never even seed ye holdin' a popgun before!" cried the constable. He looked around and beheld, to his dismay, the form of the elderly man, still unconscious as the sweet young woman gently wiped the old fellow's forehead with a damp handkerchief.

"Say, this yere is turrible!" continued the constable. "Why, ef it ain't old man Greenbrier, the finest old daddy that ever drew a breath. Who done this?"

"There is the scoundrel," said Nick, pointing to Samuels. "I was riding in the train through this part of the country, instead of taking the more direct route to New York City, by Pullman, in order that I might see the country and learn about it. Before I had been settled for the trip, however, after changing cars in North Carolina, I saw this man get in. Nothing happened, except that I was surprised at his peculiar manner, until he rose up and began pumping bullets at this old gentleman. That's all I know about it, Mr. Constable," said Nick.

"Well, old Greenbrier ain't done nothin' to arouse no man's enmity. He has always befriended every feller 'at ever come to him, and I know what he's done fer Samuels yere. He's least of all got the right to shoot at 'im."

"Officer," said Nick, "we'll talk it over later. Where can we take the injured man to get the best of treatment? We must save his life if possible. There's not a minute to lose."

"Well, friend, you can have my house. I don't have no family, and I'm just a bachelor, but I've got a home and some darkies working around. I reckon that we can take care of Mr. Greenbrier right there. I'll let him have my room." This was the young farmer who spoke.

"Good fer you, Hennery Harrison," said the constable. "Yer house, on the edge of town, overlookin' the river's a good place. I'll jest abscond, or whatever ye call it, this baggage truck from the depot in th' name of the law. We'll use it fer an ambylance."

So it was that they rolled the old gentleman across the platform after having padded his temporary couch as well as possible with Nick's raincoat and the girl's long wrap. Several of the natives of Greenville began to notice the unusual procedure, and these, too, assisted in the good work. It took a few minutes to get the old gentleman comfortably ensconced in Henry Harrison's old four-poster mahogany bed—a relic of old colonial days in Virginia, when his ancestors brought over the family heirlooms from England.

Nick noticed, not without a secret chuckle, that the young girl looked about the place admiringly. And her glance at the bruised-up young Harrison was far from unkindly.

"If I could help a little romance along during my brief visit to Greenville," the detective mused, "it would be a very pleasant additional task. But first I must lay plans to square the murderous antics of this Samuels man and his allies."

So it was that the detective entered upon this unpleasant task—unpleasant to another—yet flavored with that tinge of uncertainty and danger which was so welcome to the great detective.

He left the young woman, who had told him her name, Nell Bailey, and the name of her uncle, Dobson Bailey, whose big plantation she was to visit, near Greenville. The young man was doing his best to help the old gentleman, now with his eyes slightly open and apparently returning to consciousness.

And as Nick shut the door of the darkened, comfortable room, he turned back to note that Nell was now beginning to dress, very tenderly, the bruised face of the stalwart Harrison.

It was a pretty picture. As he reached the front room of the house Nick found the constable glaring at the prisoner, Samuels, who was giving vent to a fearful tirade of profanity.

"An' my men'll git you, too, stranger!" cried Samuels. "You had best keep outen this country. We'll land ye quick."

"Then you are a dangerous and powerful man," suggested Nick Carter, with scorn in his voice.

"I'll let ye off if ye git outer yere an' let me go," began Samuels. "I alluz keep me word, an'——"

But Nick interrupted with: "Well, you may keep your word, but you are coward enough to shoot down an old and honorable man in the back!"

Samuels winced and looked up with eyes bloodshot and glowering with hatred.

Nick slipped another pair of nippers on the man's ankles, and arranged his position so that he was absolutely helpless as far as escape was concerned. Then the detective and the constable withdrew to an other room to talk over the details.

Nick, however, had overlooked one thing. It was really not his fault, for the constable had assured him that no friends of the Samuels' gang were in the town of Greenville. But, on leaving Samuels to his own devices, limited as they were, Nick had left the man in a room which looked out upon the open roadway, leading to the back country. Samuels, determined to thwart his captors, and with the bitter animosity of his great, though evil, will power, had dragged himself, inch by inch, toward the window. His ankles were bound. His wrists were tightly clamped together, and yet, in this helpless condition, he managed to pull himself up and gaze from the window, in spite of the double system of shackling which Nick Carter had used on him, to connect wrists with ankles.

Samuels gazed out of the window, sourly and angrily. But, strange as it might seem, a broad smile crossed his face as he espied two men in an old-fashioned "buckboard" driving along the roadway toward the house and headed for the center of town. He looked shiftily behind him. The door was open between the room where he was confined and the one in which Carter and Constable Si Stebbins were conversing. The two representatives of the law were chatting in a low tone, so he could not understand their words. But that tone was enough

to cover up his purpose and to make sufficient noise in the ears of the two guardians for him to lean forward through the window and give a low whistle.

The men in the buckboard looked toward the house and the open window, above which peered the head of Samuels. Again he gave this little signal. It was very curious and exactly like the chirp of a robin, except for a curious little twist of the last note. It was a very crafty signal devised by very clever criminals for their own mysterious usage. In this case it was very handy, for the man who was driving suddenly reined in the stout mule which drew the vehicle.

The other man leaped to the ground, vaulted nimbly over the neat white rail fence, and hurried to the window, drawing a revolver as he did so. He smiled at the pinioned Samuels—or at least his scarred and repulsive visage came as near a smile as it seemed possible for it ever to do. And Samuels smiled back with a significant wink, portentous of a world of mystery and as expressive as many a five-minute talk.

The man leaned in the window, saw the manacles upon the wrists and ankles of Samuels, and then suddenly caught hold of the bound man. With the strength of the giant that he was, he bodily lifted the heavy Samuels through the window and upon the ground.

They listened, but so stealthily had the human hoist worked that not a warning sound had gone forth to the detective. Si Stebbins and Nick Carter arranged a plan of action, absolutely ignorant of the occurrences within such a short radius of them.

There was no window in the room which the detective occupied at this juncture, which looked out toward the roadway. Accordingly he had no chance to observe the activities which were going on in the big window looking toward the lane.

And as for Henry Harrison and Nell Bailey, they were too much engrossed in the task of caring for the old man and of becoming better acquainted under the queer circumstances of their meeting.

It was an ideal opportunity for Samuels, and one of those fortunate chances which one so often sees come, not to the good and deserving, but to the wicked people in this world.

Nick Carter was learning the details of the Samuels gang and their criminal reputation in this neighborhood from Si Stebbins. The constable was brimful to overflowing with his subject.

Meanwhile, at a signal from the brawny rogue who had rescued Samuels, the man in the buckboard came hustling from his seat in the ancient conveyance.

"Hyar, Zeb!" cried the human hoist, in a stage whisper, "heft aholt of the boss! They got 'im clapped up in some of them city handholders! Steady now, boy—don't make no noise!"

"Whar'd ye git this way, boss?" asked the mule teamster; "tell me!"

"S-s-sh!" cautioned Samuels, too wary and too eager for his chance at escape to desire forfeiting it by a tale of woe. "Quick—heft me on behind yoh buckboard, and git me to Rattlesnake Pete's gin shop!"

The words were spoken in a low tone—barely more than a whisper. But the manner in which the men obeyed the curt order was marvelous. Samuels was indeed boss monarch of his own section.

"Hustle now!" he grunted, as they bore him rapidly yet clumsily to the wagon.

They were unable to unlock the manacles of the latest-improved make which Carter always carried for emergency use. So they rolled Samuels over on his side, getting his head as comfortable as they could on a horse blanket. One of the men threw the dilapidated lap robe, speckled with yellow mud of the terrible Virginia mountain roads over Samuels' form.

"Git ap!" ordered the driver, and the mule started on with nothing more suspicious-looking on the rear of the vehicle than an apparent bundle of rags.

Nick Carter heard the crunching of the wheels, as the sound was carried around the corner of Harrison's house, and he hurried out to have a look at the passers-by.

"Who are they, constable?" He was somehow disquieted by the looks of the men—or, rather, by the backs of their heads, for they had been quick to note his scrutiny and had promptly looked in the opposite direction.

"Them's strangers," was Stebbins' first comment. But as he saw the mule disappearing behind some big bushes by the side of the lane, that peculiar instinct for recognizing nags which seems born in a countryman came to his aid.

"Gol ding my cats!" he exclaimed, and ran forward. "That mewl belongs to one of Samuels' men, shore's yer born!"

At these words Nick Carter dashed into the dining room, through the window of which the renegade had been assisted to his escape.

"Great Scott!" cried Carter, forced to admire the adroitness his all-too-clever prisoner possessed. "That was the cleverest get-away I have witnessed in many a year!"

Stebbins followed him. The constable could not express any emotion except a rush of fine old Virginia profanity to a skilled tongue. Even Henry Harrison and the pretty young volunteer nurse came rushing into the dining room to learn the cause of his outburst.

"Why, Si—where's Samuels?" asked the owner of the house. "You surely have not let him get away?"

This was adding insult to injury. But Nick Carter's usual kind diplomacy saved the feelings of the old constable. He had kept his own professional identity strictly to himself. He now spoke up.

"It was my fault—truly. It happened because I was talking to the police officer and taking his mind off his duty. But I am game to make up for it if I can get the help I want."

Harrison's chin was bandaged now. He looked like a boy with the mumps.

"I calculate you're thinking of catching him if you can get some one to go with you who knows the wads. Is that it, mister?" inquired the young farmer, while the girl looked startled.

"Oh, you wouldn't dare chase them into the mountains, surely. I've heard my uncle, when he visited us down in Raleigh, tell about these Samuels—and he said that pursuers or sheriffs never came back alive after trying to get them."

"He's kyrect!" confirmed Constable Stebbins.

Nick Carter only smiled grimly and looked searchingly

into the fearless gray eyes of Henry Harrison. He nodded as though in admiration as well as agreement with the manly chap's interrogatory.

"You're right, Mr. Harrison. I caught a glimpse of a big bundle on the rear of that buckboard—just a snapshot glance as you might call it, but that was enough. I know that they will have to hunt up a blacksmith to break those handcuffs and anklets. Now, we can trace them easily, and if you are willing to risk your life with me in the cause of justice, we can leave the young lady here, nursing old Mr. Greenbrier, who seems so popular except with Samuels—the constable can stand guard on your home, and we can apprehend this murderous Samuels before he gets two miles out of reach."

"I'm willing!" cried Harrison. "I didn't know city folks had so much spunk!"

"But how can ye tell ter ketch 'em?" asked the constable.

"Because they were driving toward the center of the village. We can trace them from the natives around town; all they have to do is to watch the rigs come and go."

Nick took along an extra revolver with several good "helpings" of ammunition. Henry Harrison was not without a good brace of revolvers which he carried—one in each side coat pocket—handier than in a hip pocket, for use against possible ambushers.

Meantime Samuels was chuckling in his curious hiding place, as the buckboard rolled peacefully on through town.

CHAPTER X.

THE RENEGADES SURPRISED.

The detective and young Harrison mounted two good horses, which were obtained from the single livery stable of Greenville, and struck out directly after the buckboard. Nick plied Harrison with questions about the "back country," as it was called.

His informant had known many of Samuels' gangsters and rascally secret members—half farmers, half bandits, without having met the ringleader. He knew every crossroad and valley, mountain and stream for at least six or seven miles back from the village. From there on they would have to take their chances, although Henry knew the main directions. Nick was already planning a little coup by which he might nab the leading spirits of the terrorizing rascals.

Down on Main Street a shrewd inquiry from Harrison brought the information that the gray mule and the buckboard had passed out of the village down toward the covered bridge which led to the southward.

"Well, that's funny," declared Henry, as they rode on. "Samuels' place is up to the north. They may not have him after all."

Nick shook his head and replied:

"They are just doubling on their trail—the oldest trick in the world. Have no fear—the rascal is with them."

They rode on, and Nick explained his plans. They were up against a tremendous obstacle in having no way to head off the escape nor any one with whom they could communicate, as might have been done had the case been a police matter in a big city.

"There comes an old wagon; maybe the driver of that can give us a hint," said Nick. "You'd better ask him, Harrison."

The young man did so, and they learned that the buckboard had just preceded them down the dusty road and had turned to the right into a rough cut-out lane, which Harrison knew led to the other turnpike. This thoroughfare was an old State road, which made a detour around the town of Greenville and then led back to the highlands, in which were the headquarters of Samuels.

Nick and his companion quickened the speed of their horses, and hurried along the roadway down toward the covered bridge, which could be discerned crossing the river as it wound around among the thick foliage of the Virginia woodlands.

"They could ambush us pretty easily, but they won't suspect any pursuit, unless I am very much mistaken," was Nick's opinion to Harrison as they sped along.

"I'm ready for them!" cried the young farmer, drawing a weapon. "Any man who would shoot down old Greenbrier deserves death."

"Not a single thing the old man said, either, from which we could get a clew, eh?"

"No, sir. He wouldn't believe us when we said that it was Samuels—during one of the few minutes that he regained consciousness back there in my house."

Carter grunted. He knew that there was some bad work afoot, and felt confident from his own quiet conclusions that old Greenbrier was unaware of it, or else he would never have ridden so unprotectedly in the railroad train.

They hurried on down toward the bridge, which was on a lower level of the roadway.

"Look out, now!" cautioned Harrison. "They're keeping a sharp lookout, you may be sure."

But the gentlemen on the buckboard had not seen them coming. A long stretch of roadway, far beyond the river, showed clear and without a single team.

"I bet they're in the bridge, and we'll startle them—I know what they are doing!" cried the young farmer.

By this time the horses had reached the bridge, and inside, in the covered way, shaded and barely distinguishable, except by the black silhouette against the bright square at the other end of the bridge, could be seen the two men. The buckboard had stopped. The men were tugging and pulling at the legs of Samuels and trying vainly to saw or pull asunder the sharp steel manacles, which must have cut into his flesh cruelly.

"That'll do him no good," quickly flashed through Nick's mind, for he knew the strength of the handcuffs.

At the sound of the hoofbeats on the bridge, thunderous by comparison with the soft thuds on the roadway before they reached it, the men so industriously tugging at Samuels looked up from their occupation. They had been engrossed in their task, and were to pay the penalty for their lack of caution.

Bang! bang! bang!

Nick Carter sent three shots upward into the woodwork of the bridge, and yelled at the top of his voice:

"Surrender, or you're dead men!"

There were two rifles in the buckboard, and these would have been of deadly vantage for the rascals had not Nick and his comrade been so quickly upon them. Their revolvers were pointed at the two mountaineers' breasts. In a jiffy the men had their hands above their heads, and were only too glad to hold them there, with Nick's smoking and warm revolver so near them.

"Now, I guess you won't get away again so easily!" cried Carter to Samuels.

"I'll git away all right—ye don't know me!" cried the unconquerable Samuels. He tried to kick at Harrison, but that young man was still nursing the chin, bruised from the steel of the handcuff blow. He suddenly swung his riding whip across the rascal's legs and brought forth a yelp.

In this instant a man whom he had been covering had dropped to his knees and now took a daring chance for liberty.

As every reader, familiar with old country bridges of this sort, knows, there are openings along either side of the bridge roadway, intended to act as vents for flood waters and to allow some light into the center of the bridge.

Through this opening of the bridge the man dropped downward into the water below. It was a desperate chance for escape, and the excited Harrison was on the point of firing point-blank at him as soon as he struck the water.

"Stop!" cried Nick. "Let him escape. He will go get his gang to rescue these two rascals. He knows where Samuels has been kept before. He will know still better where the other two are, if I have my way."

Henry did not understand. The two prisoners, one handcuffed and the other hands-upped, were puzzled, too. Nick was willing for them to be so. But he lost no time now. The other man was swimming with bold strokes down the river, flattering himself on his own shrewdness. Unknown to him, Nick Carter was letting him go forth as a sort of bait for more wild animals of his own kind to be drawn into Nick's clever trap.

"Home now with our guests!" said the detective.

In a jiffy the second prisoner was manacled and placed upon the seat of the buckboard. Then he was bound, hands behind him, to a stout little iron bar which supported the seat from the rear.

Samuels was placed inside the buckboard—or on the back part of it, to be more accurate. Nick rode behind to keep a sharp eye on both men. Henry rode ahead, leading the mule by its halter.

Thus they returned to the little town of Greenville, and the reader can guess the excitement which such a cavalcade created. The detective had only been there a few hours, but he had stirred up more excitement than had been caused in many a year. The story of old man Greenbrier's having been shot had started the gossip, and it seemed to Nick as though every man, woman, child, and yellow dog was out to form a reception committee as they returned.

The constable was called; the local judge held a special sitting for the detention of the men, remanding them for criminal trial—Samuels because of his shooting, and the other fellow as an accessory in helping him to escape from an officer.

"Now," said Nick, as the men were locked up in the dilapidated town jail, unless I judge wrongly, to-night we will discover a little new excitement."

"In what way, neighbor?" asked the constable. "Ye're certainly thar when it comes ter doin' things."

"Well, I believe that the man who escaped will bring his whole gang to terrorize the town, and to rescue Samuels. It is necessary to take steps to prevent this. Consequently, I think you should call for volunteers to form a posse of the citizens to protect themselves and their homes."

"Thet's right!" agreed Si Stebbins. And by sunset he had collected nearly a hundred men, armed with rifles and revolvers, who were ready to fight to the death.

"You're a brave set down here," said Nick to Harrison. "I couldn't get many citizens of New York to do this on such short notice—that is certain."

"Well, it's the mountains and the big streams, and the high sky that we get down here in such big quantities," said Harrison. "You can't help but be game if there's anything in you at all."

The night came on, and although really directing affairs, Nick worked matters so that it looked as though Harrison and Si Stebbins were the generals. This would not hurt Nick. It would benefit them and make them the local heroes if his plan worked out successfully, and Nick was always one to let the other man get whatever credit he deserved.

The armed men were scattered all around the different roadways leading into town.

As Nick hinted, Si Stebbins gave orders to them to arrest one by one the single horseman or rough-looking strangers who might come into the village by devious ways.

Nick, having had experience before with these mountain gangsters, had a good guess that they would send in men, by different routes, to have a force of supporters in the field before the ringleaders came to do the "star" work. Accordingly, Nick and Si, with Harrison and several of the best shots and most daring spirits, waited for the real excitement hidden away in the hallway of the building which combined courtroom and lockup. The prisoners, from other cases, had been taken to quarters far down at the other end of town. The two men from the mountains, however, Nick intended keeping right in the building, to act as further bait. They were securely handcuffed, but were in a room right in the center of the building with a lock easy to force. A bright light was burning in this room, which had no windows.

The men with Nick waited in the dark, and it was not until an hour had passed before they heard footsteps on the stone entryway of the old building.

The door was locked. The lock was bumped and banged, and finally the portal swung open. Several men slipped into the roomy corridor and walked toward the lighted room which contained the two prisoners.

"Ain't this easy?" chuckled one fellow.

"Sure, it's all over town that they got Samuels and Seck thar in the center of the co'thouse. I knows the room, Dick. Come yere, this away with me!" cried another.

Into the room they went, but first one man gave that peculiar birdlike, quavering signal whistle. It was answered promptly from within.

"Are the lookouts outside, Dick?" asked one of the men.

"Yep. They kin keep a regiment away from these yer doors. We's in right, boy."

The ten or more men with Nick hardly breathed, so anxious were they to perfect their trap.

Into the room the men forced themselves, and they chuckled now, feeling confident of the ability of their lookouts on the front of the building, and around it on all sides to protect them. The thought that a reception committee, armed to the teeth, awaited them on the inside of the building never entered their heads.

Nick slipped toward the door and quietly closed the outer portal, and this time fastened a powerful bar across it, prepared for the occasion and guaranteed to resist a fierce onslaught.

The detective slipped forward noiselessly, listening at the doorway to the inner room. He wanted damaging evidence against the rogues, and he got it.

"Wall, Samuels, ye peppered old Greenbrier!" said one of the men. "Ye took a big resk, a-doing it!"

"Yep! But I done what we needed," replied Samuels, in a low voice. "To-morrow is the last day that the authorities can decide against us on them fake lumber claims. The old man'll lose his prop'ty case he can't file counter charge agin' us, and up at Richmond, in th' statehouse, they don't know nothin' about him bein' shot."

"Good! Sarved 'im right fer being so slow—but lucky fer us."

"I know. Nice ole cuss, too, but business is business. Hyar, git me outen this place quick, an' no more delay, or I'll make somebody sweat!"

The men tried to work at his manacles again. As they did so, Nick and several of the men slipped to the door. They forced it open, and with the gangsters inside in the bright light, and the posse members outside the only exit, in the dark, they had a tremendous advantage over the rascals.

"Hands up!" said Nick Carter. "We've got the State guard here, and we have been offered a reward for you all, alive or dead. You gentlemen can take your choice as to which way you wish to be delivered."

The men were startled, and would have resisted, had not several bristling gun barrels protruded in the doorway to let them know that they were not alone.

"Drop your guns!" muttered Nick, plainly enough for them to hear. "This house is full of gunmen, and the outside men you have are surrounded as well. They'll die by a fire from both sides. There's nothing to do but surrender."

This was absolutely so.

Surrender they did. And by the detective's clever ruse all the gang men were apprehended without the interchange of a shot. The lookouts were convinced from the orders in front and rear that they had stepped into a hornets' nest. The stragglers around town were treated the same way, and before ten o'clock that evening Nick had the satisfaction of seeing more than forty bad men of the Samuels crowd securely bound hand and foot, ready for shipment to the county seat.

It was learned from the papers and records found on one or two of the captured ringleaders that a gigantic fraud had been planned against the property of old Greenbrier, and that the rascals were mixed up in many crooked deals of various sorts. It was a great victory—for Si Stebbins, which later brought him a raise in salary from the village council. And in the course of the next few months Henry Harrison was doubly honored by being elected mayor of the village, and the husband of pretty Nell Bailey.

Nick arranged that the old man should be properly represented in the courts next day, and gave his card and address in New York so that he might testify if necessary to preserve the old man's rights.

Having closed up accounts quickly and helped clear out the worst members of the Samuels gang, he took the midnight train, which bore him on his way North. After a tiresome journey, he reached his destination at the metropolis, feeling that his mission had been a good one. Yet he had a terrible ordeal before him ere he could clear up the atmosphere of the other land grafters.

CHAPTER XI.

FATAL CURIOSITY.

Nick was met by Patsy, to whom he had telegraphed. Patsy told him that Chick was in Worcester, helping Foster get started on a new farm. Nick telegraphed Chick to stay in Worcester till he arrived, and then went on to that city.

The morning after he reached there the papers had an advertisement about Florida farm lands. The advertisement read almost exactly like the circular that Foster had received from Preble. Easy terms were

offered to farmers, and they were invited to call at a certain office on Main Street to see maps and learn particulars. The name signed to this advertisement was Theodore Wellman.

At an early hour that morning a desk and some chairs were put into the office mentioned in the advertisement, and a sign painter called and put the words "Florida Land" on the door.

All this was done before ten o'clock, at which time Mr. Wellman came in, and he was ready for business, but nobody called on him till after noon. Then a farmer arrived who said he'd seen what was said in the paper and guessed he'd look into the thing.

"I am sorry," responded Mr. Wellman, "that I can't give you any more information just now. You see, I've only begun business to-day and my maps have been delayed somewhere on the railroad. Call again next week."

The farmer said he would do so, and went away. Three or four others called and got the same sort of answer to their questions. A little after three o'clock, however, a man came in with whom Mr. Wellman was more willing to talk.

"I understand," said the caller, "that you are dealing in Florida lands."

"Yes," replied Mr. Wellman.

"Where are they?"

"In Florida."

The caller smiled.

"Of course," he said; "I didn't suppose they were in Texas. What part of the State?"

"My maps haven't arrived, or I would show you. Can't you come in again to-morrow?"

"Perhaps, but I say, Mr. Wellman, I think you've kind of got into my field."

"So?"

"Yes; I deal in Florida land, too."

"You don't say!"

"And the queer thing is that I make just about the same announcement that you do."

Mr. Wellman looked at his caller a moment, and said slyly:

"Perhaps that is because we deal in the same kind of land."

The caller winked.

"Can you raise a good crop of alligators on yours?" he asked.

"Fine!" said Wellman.

"Then I guess we are in the same line, and what I think, Mr. Wellman, is that there isn't room for two of us in Worcester."

"So?"

"Sure! Now, I was here first——"

"But I've come to stay."

"Well, then, we ought to arrange a deal between ourselves so that one can help the other."

"That might do."

"You see," and the caller lowered his voice, "we could get the farmers between us and squeeze them. We can make it appear that there's a big boom in Florida land, and so get higher prices. What do you think?"

"It's worth thinking of. I shall want to know exactly how you would manage it."

"Of course! I saw your advertisement, and was very curious about it. I thought I was onto your game, but I didn't think of our working together until just now. Let's talk it over to-morrow, will you?"

"With pleasure."

"Then come to my hotel and lunch with me. I'll have a plan ready to discuss."

"All right," said Mr. Wellman; "I'll be there. What hotel?"

"Bay State; one o'clock."

The men said "good day" and parted, after which Mr. Wellman closed his office for the day.

He went to the Waldo House and entered a room where Chick was reading.

"Well, Nick," said Chick, looking up, "have you hooked him?"

"Yes," replied Nick Carter, alias Wellman; "he has bitten, and wants me to become his partner."

He then told Chick about the meeting with Preble, for that was "Mr. Wellman's" last caller, and about the lunch at which they were to talk over matters on the next day.

"Preble," said Nick, "will speak freely about his swindling schemes, and that will be evidence enough to send him up for a long term. But you must manage to hear what he says, Chick, as it will be safer to have more than my testimony against him."

"All right, old man, I'll be on hand."

Next day, at one, Nick went into the Bay State House office, and was met by Preble, who said:

"I've ordered lunch in my room, so that we can talk more freely than if we were at the dining-room table."

They went up to a room on the north side of the third floor, where a table was spread and waiting for them.

Preble told the waiter that they would get along without him, and the man went out. He then sat down and asked Nick to do so.

The detective took a seat opposite Preble. At his right in front of him was a window, Preble's back being to it. Behind the detective, at a distance about a dozen feet was a wardrobe, or closet. It was not a closet made into the wall, but more like a big box with doors. The doors were closed when Nick en-

tered, but he had hardly taken his seat when they began to slowly open.

"Help yourself, Mr. Wellman," said Preble. "We can talk after we've eaten a bit."

The wardrobe doors opened a little farther.

Nick filled his plate.

"I suppose," he remarked, "that you've already sold some of your land?"

"Yes, some."

"Do you throw in boats and rafts when you sell?"

Nick laughed as he spoke, and winked at Preble.

A dark, hateful face appeared between the wardrobe doors. It looked fiercely at the detective. Then the eyes were turned for an instant at Preble. The latter moved his chair a little to one side.

"Not quite," he said, in answer to Nick, and he grinned.

"A raft," added the detective, "might be handy for the farmer when he went out to plant potatoes."

"Or pick oranges."

Both men laughed.

Preble took a mouthful of food.

"Don't wait, Mr. Wellman," he said; "things will get cold. We can talk afterward."

The man in the wardrobe raised his hands. They held a bow and arrow. Very carefully he aimed the arrow. It was pointed toward the back of Nick's neck. Preble's servant, the Indian Penola, held the weapon, and the Indian knew what would happen if the tip of the arrow head should scratch his victim's skin. Poison of the deadliest kind was on the arrow tip. One drop of it mingling with a man's blood would kill him instantly.

Nick took a swallow of water and reached for a piece of bread.

Preble coughed.

At that the Indian's right hand let go the bow string. The poisoned arrow flew straight toward Nick's head.

And at that instant a pane of glass in the window was broken. Only a little hole was made in it—just big enough for a pistol bullet. The bullet flew faster than the arrow, and struck it in mid-air. The arrow snapped in two pieces. The head, with its poisoned tip, was turned from its course and struck the wall. The other end dropped to the floor.

As the cough was the signal for Penola to shoot, so the pistol shot was a signal for Nick. He didn't know that it was coming, but when it came, he acted without delay.

Jumping up, he pushed the table over against Preble. Dishes and things fell to the floor with a crash. Preble was almost tipped over, and before he could get his balance, Nick was upon him.

There was a short struggle, and then the swindler lay on the floor, cursing, his hands held fast with bracelets.

Meantime there was another crash. This time it was Chick dashing straight through the window. He had taken the next room to Preble and got out on the window sill, from which he stepped to the sill of the window to Preble's room. There he meant to stand in order to overhear the conversation between the swindler and Nick.

From where he stood he could see the wardrobe. He saw the doors open and the arrow aimed. At just the right moment he fired, and so saved Nick from death.

Penola was already trying to escape from the door, but Chick caught him and threw him with fearful force to the floor. Handcuffs were put on while he lay there half stunned.

"Curse you!" muttered Preble, "you are Nick Carter, aren't you?"

"I am," Nick replied; "when did you find it out?"

"Not till now."

"You really thought I was a land swindler, did you?"

"I may as well admit it, now that the game's up," replied Preble. "I thought you'd got into the kind of game I was working and that it would be safer if there was only me in it. Penola was sure he could fix you so that the doctors would think you died of heart disease."

"Well," replied Nick, "I expected to trap you into statements that would do to send you up for a few years, but this is better. I shall charge you with attempted murder."

Both Preble and the Indian were sentenced to prison for life. Taylor could not be found at that time, but Nick did not worry about him, as Preble was the important man. It happened, though, that the detective ran across Taylor at another time, the circumstances of which will be told in another number of this weekly.

Nearly a thousand dollars in cash were found upon Preble. The court decided that this money could not belong to him, and it was used to bring Hawkins and other farmers who had been swindled by him back North.

THE END.

"Nick Carter and the Professor; or, Solving a Scientific Problem," is the title of the story that will appear in the next issue of this weekly. This story tells how Nick unmasked an insane professor of chemistry who had lost his reason through the study of a scientific problem. The professor had deliberately caused the apparent death of a boy (which had become real when the boy had been embalmed) for the purpose of making an experiment. The professor then tries to experiment with the boy's sister. Nick Carter does some very clever work in this story. It is No. 5, and it will be out October 12th.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Troops Ascend Mountain 10,695 Feet in Altitude.

All European military records for carrying artillery to the greatest height in the mountains have just been beaten by a company of officers and men from Fort Savatan, under the command of Captain Hanswirth and Lieutenants Gupper, Perrenoud, and Frick.

The officers and soldiers, in full uniform, with their Maxims and "mitrailleuses," ascended to the summit of the Dent de Midi, 10,695 feet in altitude, a difficult climb even when unencumbered.

The last portion of the climb, when the men were obliged to cut footholds in the ice, was specially dangerous, but there was no accident, and artillery practice, which included attacking a mountain pass occupied by the enemy, was successfully carried out. When the roll call was sounded in the evening at Champery not a single man, in spite of great fatigue, was missing.

These Alpine maneuvers prove that in time of war Swiss soldiers can "command" the highest Alpine passes and mountains with light artillery.

Find Treasure of $500,000.

A valuable discovery of buried treasure has been made in the village of Malaia Pereshchepina, in the government of Poltava. Some farm laborers while digging in a field came across an old chest containing gold and silver coins and vessels.

The coins date back to the fourth century, but the most valuable article is a large silver dish damascended in gold. It bears a Latin inscription showing that it is of very ancient origin, and was in the possession of a bishop living in the seventh century.

Other articles include gold and silver Persian cups, silver vessels of Byzantine workmanship, and about 450 gold and 50 silver coins. There is also a quantity of bracelets and other ornaments. The collection is valued by experts at about $500,000.

Airmen Poorly Paid in Germany.

That a German aëroplane pilot's wages are only $25 to $35 a month was revealed when the aviators of Johannisthal organized a union demanding a minimum of $75 a month. They pointed out that no insurance company would take risks on their lives, and that their employers would not pay anything to their families if they were killed or injured. They were forced, they said, to brave all sorts of weather in pleasing prospective buyers of aëroplanes and training beginners to operate them, and thought they should be paid wages commensurate with the risk and the skill employed.

Ban Johnson is Not Opposed to a Players' Union.

President B. B. Johnson, of the American League, is not opposed to a baseball players' protective association, which was outlined at a recent meeting in New York of major-league players. Johnson said that a union modeled on the lines of the labor unions probably would not be tolerated, but he saw no reason why players should not have an organization to proceed along legitimate lines as "boosters" for the game.

He was not in a position to say whether the proposed association would be admitted to the national commission.

Children Aid in War on Cigarettes.

The summer campaign against the smoking of cigarettes and kindred habits conducted by the Anticigarette League has met with considerable success in the summer schools in Brooklyn. Since January 1, Field Secretary Manfred P. Welcher has delivered nearly 200 addresses in the fight to overcome the practice. A considerable number have been given since the opening of the summer schools.

Secretary Welcher finds the summer schools a most fruitful field for his labors. The children listened with close attention to his talks, and in nearly every instance were greatly impressed with the contrast which he described as existing between the smoker and the one who has never become friendly with the seductive weed.

On August 1 he addressed the pupils of Public School No. 5, of which Mrs. I. W. McNeil is principal. The following day he received an urgent request for a supply of buttons from Mrs. McNeil, who wrote that the children were anxious to have the buttons that they might conduct their campaign under the league badge. Secretary Welcher distributed the buttons himself and left highly pleased with the attitude of the children.

"To realize the dreadful effect of the cigarette on the small boy it would be necessary for you to get in close touch with the situation, as I have," said Secretary Welcher. "We are making wonderful progress, and in time I believe we will gain an overwhelming victory.

"I find the children are quick to see the dangers of the cigarette habit and are willing to join in the campaign. When I tell of the effects of smoking and of the vast difference in the physical condition of the boy who refrains they instantly make their choice, and that is not to smoke cigarettes."

Sergeant Roosevelt Discharged Gets Good Position.

By an executive order of President Taft, Mingo Sanders, who was a sergeant of the colored infantry regiment discharged from the army without honor when several companies of the regiment likewise were discharged for participation in the Brownsville riots, became a messenger in the classified service and went to work at the interior department at $70 a month.

Recently Sanders took part as a spellbinder in the Ohio primary fight between President Taft and Colonel Roosevelt. Representative Rodenburg, of Illinois, said he would introduce in the House a bill to reinstate Sanders in the army and permit his retirement at once. When discharged Sanders had served 26 years, and after another year's service would have been entitled to retirement at two-thirds pay and allowances. Later, Mr. Rodenburg says, he will introduce a bill for the reinstatement of all innocent soldiers discharged for participation in the Brownsville riots.

Steamship "Olympic" to Have New Hull Added.

During the coming winter the White Star Line steamship *Olympic* will undergo a renovation costing close to $1,000,000. The principal alteration will be the provision of side bunkers which practically means an inner or second hull.

The decision of the White Star Line to renovate the *Olympic* is in accordance with a recommendation contained in the judgment pronounced by the British board of trade inquiry into the *Titanic* disaster, that seagoing ships, in addition to their watertight transverse bulkheads, be provided with a double skin, carried about the water line, or with a longitudinal vertical watertight bulkhead on each side of the vessel, or both.

Says Communication With Mars Almost Possible.

According to M. De Bressignac, of France, who has spent a huge fortune in the endowment of astronomical institutions, communication will be established with Mars within the next year or so. After thirty years spent trying to talk with the Martland and studying their planet with the aid of powerful instruments, this famous scientist explodes many former conclusions in a lengthy statement just made public. "The Martians," says De Bressignac, "are tall and fair-haired. Their eyes are not overcast by heavy lids, as has been supposed. On the contrary, it is almost certain that they have little use for lids or lashes, sleeping with their eyes open under the influence of the peculiar Martian night. Sleep comes upon them while they are at work, and they are mainly agricultural. Both their footwear and clothing are products of a vegetable growth." He explains very lucidly how he arrives at these conclusions.

Flogging Revived in England.

Flogging is to be revived as a punishment for men under the new criminal law amendment act. It is to be imposed for certain offenses showing a degenerate or demoralized disposition. The amendment authorizing this punishment was not accepted without violent opposition, and a clause extending the use of the whip to women was withdrawn after it was denounced as barbarous.

In the course of the debate, Major D'Alton, a former Indian campaigner, said civilization had made prisons so attractive to a certain class of criminals that they couldn't be happy at liberty. The world would have to move backward to meet the backwardness of humanity, he predicted.

Cure for Rabies Discovered.

A simple cure for rabies has been discovered by the Florentine professor, Doctor Nabini. It is the introduction into the food of dogs of essence of hyacinth and senna. "Rabies," says Doctor Nabini, "is due solely to the congestion of vapors in

the head of the animal. These can be easily removed without destroying the life of the subject." The killing of mad dogs he holds to be a reckless destruction of the lives of friends of mankind.

Tramp Leaves $40,000 to Benefactress.

Several years ago a tramp appeared at the kitchen in which Maggie Drain was working and asked for something to eat. The family in which she was employed as a servant protested, but she gave the man breakfast.

An hour later he returned with a paper, which he handed to her, charging her to keep it. It proved to be a document giving to the girl the property of Marshall McMurran at his death.

McMurran owned a farm in an adjoining county. When he died a few years ago, the document was presented and claim to his property made. The relatives of McMurran sought to break the will, but it was sustained by the court. Miss Drain will get about $40,000.

Firebug Destroys Million Dollars' Worth of Property.

Bernard C. Murray has confessed to having set fire to 30 hotels and public buildings in Connecticut and western Massachusetts during the past four months.

Among the incendiary fires which Murray has admitted being responsible for are: April 19, Waterbury, Conn., city hall and Chelsea Hotel; May 23, Greenfield, Mass., Taylor block and Hollister House; June 1, Turners Falls, Mass., Grand Trunk Hotel and Allen block; June 8, Greenfield, Mass., Central House; June 22, Turners Falls, Vladish Hotel and Bartlett block; July 5, and within the following few days, 18 fires in and about Springfield.

While no lives were lost in the many fires, hundreds of persons, a majority of them guests, were imperiled, and the damage resulting amounts to $1,000,000.

"Uncle Joe" Cannon Bust to Cost $2,000.

Friends of Former Speaker Joe Cannon are chipping in to purchase a bust of the Illinois congressman. It is not known who started the fund, but Major Alexander McDowell, former clerk of the House of Representatives and an intimate friend of Cannon, is among the subscribers.

The bust will cost $2,000, and is being made by an artist of world-wide reputation. The bust will be presented soon to Cannon as a testimonial of his long service in public life.

Artificial Silk in Ribbons.

Following the assertion made several weeks ago, by men prominent in the New York silk market, that the future of the domestic silk and ribbon industries was threatened by the promiscuous use of tin and other adulterants in the process of dyeing, a well-known local ribbon man has complained that certain manufacturers are now embodying artificial silk in their products to meet the existing competition in that field. The incorporation of artificial silk in certain kinds of dress silks has been carried on for some time, it is said, but as far as could be learned yesterday its use in ribbons is a comparatively new venture.

The artificial fiber used in the ribbon is said to have been treated by a process that made it impossible, even for an expert, to detect it in the finished product without subjecting the ribbon to a chemical analysis. The burning test, hitherto considered infallible in the detection of the use of artificial silk, is said to have failed absolutely, the quick flare-up believed to indicate the use of a vegetable fiber in the thread having been absent. Just how the artificial fiber is treated to defy ordinary methods of detection is a puzzle to the general trade. By its use, however, it is said that certain kinds of ribbons can be manufactured as much as a cent a ligne cheaper than the same grade made entirely of real silk, and it is further said that it is possible to wash ribbons containing the artificial fiber without destroying their luster. What the ultimate effect of its use on the manufacture of all-silk ribbons will be is problematical.

$25 a Week is Enough for Three.

Secretary Nagel, overruling a decision by immigration officials of New York that a salary of $25 a week is not sufficient to support three persons in the United States, authorized the admission to this country of Mary and Cecilie Fleming, two elderly sisters, of Dublin, Ireland.

The women landed August 10 and sought permission to make their home with their nephew, John F. Byrne, a newspaper reporter, of New York, whom they had reared from infancy to manhood. Although Byrne, an unmarried man, declared his intention of supporting his aunts, who took the place of his parents, who died when he was 2 years old, an immigration board of special inquiry at Ellis Island held that his weekly stipend of $25 might result in the aliens becoming public charges. He will need that to take care of himself, they reported. The secretary disagreed and canceled the order for deportation.

Wealthy Hermit Dies in Squalor.

Buckingham County, Va., authorities investigating the death of George M. Nicholas, wealthy hermit farmer, of Port Republic, have discovered extraordinary affairs in the old man's life. He died after drinking coffee. His stomach is in a chemical laboratory at Richmond for examination.

Worth $250,000, which he is said to have scattered in fifteen banks in Virginia and Maryland, the old man lived in squalor in a fifteen-room mansion, bare of furniture, and slept on a bed on the floor.

He always wrote his checks on scraps of paper. He was a veteran of the Confederate army and wore a wooden leg he had made.

Blooded horses of high value died of old age upon his farm because he could not get the price he demanded.

Nicholas left no will and died unmarried, leaving four brothers.

Trail of Three Trunks; or, Who Got the Stamps?

It is not often that Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock contributes a detective story to contemporaneous literature, but he did when he forwarded to Congress "The Trail of the Three Trunks; or, Who Got the Postage Stamps?" It is a stirring tale of why Edgar Allen, junior, postmaster in Richmond, Va., should be relieved from accounting for $17,788 worth of two-cent stamps stolen from his post office in March, 1910.

The story carries the reader over seven or eight States. Detectives disguised as baggage smashers and otherwise figure frequently. The tale revolves about the desperate attempt of Edward Fay and Richard Harris to "get away with the swag" in three trunks, and the trail of the trunks which led to the discovery of the culprits; the return of part of the booty and prison cells for the burglary.

Much Claiming of Antique Titles.

The most popular pastime in aristocratic circles in London just now is the claiming of extinct or dormant peerages, and the committee of privileges of the House of Lords is dealing with an unprecedented number of these cases.

In these days almost any one may obtain a title for political services, so nothing less than a sixteenth-century peerage really stamps you a blue blood, and every one with sufficient money to pay for the amusement is busily frisking the family pedigree to see whether it isn't possible to annex a title that has been out of commission for centuries.

The most claimed title is that of Earl of Oxford. Aubrey De Vere, twentieth earl, was the last holder of the title, and he died some 300 years ago, without male issue, but the claimants are always trying to bridge proof of their descent from the daughters of previous earls.

There are also three persons claiming a bunch of three ancient baronetcies—those of Burgh, Straholgi, and Cobham. One would think that they might come to an agreement and share them up, but no—each claims the lot. One of the attractions of Straholgi title is that a former holder was hanged on an extra special 50-foot gibbet by King Edward I., while the last Lord Cobham was the first Protestant martyr to be burned by Henry V.

Another much-sought lot of baronetcies are those of Fitzwarine, Dynaunt, and Martin, which have been out of use since Henry VIII.'s time. One of the Lords Fitzwarine, trusted captain to Henry I., gained notoriety by hitting Prince John—afterward king—over the head with a chessboard and nearly killing him.

Lady Petre, widow of the thirteenth Lord Petre, is claiming the barony of Furnival on behalf of her only child, who otherwise would be compelled to go through life with a wretched 1608 barony. The Furnival title goes back to Richard I.

Suffragist Riding Broncho from Wyoming Calls on Governor Wilson.

A cloud of dust, a dashing broncho, divided leather skirt, sombrero, bandanna handkerchief and gauntlets that brought up with a whoop and flourish in front of the Little White House recently, dissolved itself into Miss Alma Claire, suffragist, of Sheridan, Wyo., who told the governor that the women of her State were for him for president. Miss Claire told the governor that she made the trip from New York in five hours and that she rode all the way from Wyoming. She declared she would go back to Sheridan on horseback.

Chartered Vast Area Now Blank on Maps.

The four members of the Herschel Parker expedition which explored the eastern slope of Mount McKinley and attained an altitude of 20,000 feet on the mountain, being turned back by a storm when near the summit, have returned by way of White Horse and Skagway. The party not only charted a vast area now blank upon the

maps, but demonstrated the possibility of reaching the top of the great mountain by the northern or Muldrow glacier route.

Frank Work Left $13,600,000 Estate.

The net estate left by Frank Work, who was one of the best-known horsemen in the country and for years a prominent figure in Wall Street, is $13,600,000, according to figures filed in the surrogate's court, in New York, by a transfer tax appraiser.

Mr. Work died in March, 1911. Aside from his home in this city his entire estate was made up of stocks and bonds in numerous corporations. It was left for the most part to his children and grandchildren.

Alaska's Gold Output Smaller than in Years.

The steamship *Victoria* arrived from Nome, Alaska, with $543,000 of gold bullion and 283 passengers recently. The heavy passenger list is because of an exodus of miners as the result of placer mining on Seward Peninsula and in the Yukon Valley being restricted by scarcity of water following the small snowfall of last winter. The gold output of Alaska for 1912 promises to be smaller than for several years.

Jailbird from Nome Caught in Los Angeles.

James Landers, who escaped from the Nome (Alaska) jail several months ago, and who was recaptured in Los Angeles, has been sent back to Seattle, whence he will be committed to McNeil's Island.

Landers, before his departure for the North, confessed, so the police say, to being one of the fourteen men who escaped from the Nome jail several months ago. Three of the jail breakers were killed.

First Aid to Motorists.

In connection with the patrol organization of the motor car association, a roadside telephone service has been instituted in London. It is intended to erect sentry boxes, such as already exist at some points round London, at intervals of ten miles on the main roads round all important cities.

Each sentry box will be fitted with a telephone connected with the nearest exchange, and the use of the telephones, except for trunk calls, will be free to the members. It is hoped that the telephone system will be of great use in cases of accidents and breakdowns, and to book hotel accommodations. The association is spending $200,000 a year on its patrol system.

Canadian Immigration Shows Steady Increase.

During the three months, April 1 to June 30, of the present fiscal year, 175,341 immigrants arrived in Canada. Of this number 121,998 arrived at ocean ports and 53,343 from the United States.

These figures show an increase of 15 per cent as compared with those of the corresponding months of last year, which were 109,316 at ocean ports and 43,802 from the United States, making a total for the three months of the previous year 153,118.

During the month of June this year there were 45,388 arrivals.

Slave of the Circus for Three Long Years.

Claiming that he was taken away with a dog and pony show from Charlotte, Va., about three years ago, a young man, about 17 years old, giving his name as Franklin A. Furr, was given medical attention at police station, at Columbia, S. C., and then left for his old home. Furr came to Columbia from Augusta by foot. He ran away from the dog and pony show and is seeking his family, who, he says, lived at the time of his departure near Charlotte, in the vicinity of Pineville, N. C.

The show with which young Furr says he has been traveling during his absence is a small, tented affair. He was used as a laborer. According to his story, it was by his own will that he went on the road with the show. When he saw his chance to escape, he started out immediately for his home. He has not written or heard from any of his people since his departure. He says his parents were preparing to move to another place near Charlotte when he left, and, not knowing where they went to, he has not had any communication with them. He is very anxious to locate his relatives. Pineville, where they were, is between Fort Mill and Charlotte.

Furr was unwell, and was consequently given medical attention at police station.

According to the ex-showman, he received no pay for his services as laborer, but was furnished with clothes and board. His travels have been extensive, the show having continually been on the road since he left Charlotte.

Naval Patriotism Runs High in England.

Naval patriotism has risen to such a pitch in England that enterprising clergymen are taking advantage of this fervor to recruit their own ranks. The "Dreadnaughts" threaten to exceed in membership and influence the Christian Endeavor Society, of which it is a recently born rival.

A Putney clergyman established the first "Dreadnaught" Society, the badge of which is a battleship button with "Peace" worked into the device in red letters on a blue ground. Both boys and girls are wearing these buttons, and the Putney idea has gained a national following in the course of a few weeks.

Meanwhile the dreadnaughts of war are increasing on the slips of the principal dockyards. It is understood that in face of the new figures presented to Parliament showing the outlay contemplated by other powers, the British naval estimates will be increased by not less than $150,000,000. Russia is about to spend $600,000,000 on dreadnaughts and smaller warships; France's naval program calls for an expenditure of $255,000,000; Japan, though financially straitened, is spending $175,000,000; while Germany has tacked on an additional $85,000,000 to the large sum already voted. It costs a great deal of money to keep the nations of Europe from flying at each other's throats.

Tells How Swedish Athletes Trained for Games.

Ernie Hjertberg, the Swedish American who is responsible for the wonderful showing made by Sweden at the Olympics, tells, in a recent interview, how he accomplished his great work.

"I was given every encouragement from the beginning, and, as they do in Sweden, everything was along scientific lines. First, I visited the capital or the largest city of the twenty-four provinces. There was a committee already organized in each city, and this committee was in touch with subcommittees throughout the province, the province corresponding to the State at home. After the usual preliminaries, athletic material gathered was trotted out for inspection. All the men had the rudiments of competition, but in the majority of cases that was about all. What they knew about athletics had been absorbed from continental methods and from England. I remained three days in each place, and it was up to me to upset many of the theories of training, but every competitor was willing to learn, and I had complete coöperation from the local committees.

"It took me more than three months to make the rounds, and by the time I had hit the last town I was a physical wreck, but a start in getting a team for the Olympic games had been made. After this, I made flying visits to different places, attended their meets and watched as much as I could. After starting their training in their own towns, I began to pick out the most prominent ones for the central team, and a few months back I had a round-up, so that all the men could be under my own eyes. I have had probably 150 in training at different times, and sixty most of the time, but the dependence of Sweden has been on about fifty from the start.

"Never have I found a more willing bunch of workers than the men under me. I have never had to watch them, but in order to make sure I gathered them together in one building—a hospital, but temporarily used for dormitories.

"In a few years more I look for the Swedish team to be as strong as any in the world, as the athletes will go to the limit of training without grumbling. Besides, every one wants to become an athlete. They take a pride in being the best, and when they are not and are defeated, they want to know how it was done, and so begin all over again."

Exports of Cotton Goods Increase.

Figures issued by the New York customhouse show shipments of domestics and cotton duck from this port in the week ended August 10 to have aggregated 7,936 packages, valued at $419,813, against 9,147 packages, valued at $625,601, forwarded in the preceding week. Total exports of this merchandise from New York since January 1, 1912, to the above date amounted to 270,591 packages, valued at $17,459,546, which figures showed a gain of $1,604,143 over the value of similar merchandise exported in the corresponding period last year.

Shipments to China, valued at $147,049, headed the list of the week's exports, followed by forwarding to Aden, Cuba, and the British East Indies, valued respectively at $32,680, $39,071, $22,785.

Ships Pass Many Big Icebergs.

According to the captains of incoming steamships, icebergs are still to be met with in the recognized lanes for navigation across the Atlantic and are larger and more numerous than in any year for the last quarter of a century.

The Norwegian steamship *Ravn* reported passing twenty icebergs off the east coast of Newfoundland, and had steamed slowly through the ice field for twenty-four hours.

The steamer *Exeter City*, from Swansea, reported that between latitude 47.48, longitude 43.22, to latitude 46.02, longitude 49.10, she passed three icebergs, one of which was very large, the captain said.

The captain of the steamer *Cheyenne*, from London, reported that in latitude

41.42, longitude 51.57, he sighted a large iceberg about 600 feet long and eighty feet high.

France Has 597 Millionaires.

Monsieur Davenelle, a leading economist, gives figures showing that the private wealth of France is $47,000,000,000, while a third of the adult population has nothing. The millionaires number 597, of whom 280 are worth from $2,000,000 to $10,000,000, and 70 are worth more than $10,000,000.

The wealthy Frenchman is six times richer than those of the ancient régime, and ten times richer than those of the feudal days. The income of Louis XIV. was only $4,000,000, while a dozen Frenchmen of the present day have incomes of more than a million each.

Almost every great fortune in France, Davenelle says, is of recent date, but it must be remembered that 250 years ago money had nearly two and one-half times the purchasing power it has to-day.

Woman Earns Living by Rearing Rats.

A rat and mouse farm flourishes in the little village of Granby, Mass., not many miles from Holyoke, and, what is more surprising is, that it is conducted by a woman, who is known as "the Rat Queen of America."

Miss Abby Lathrop, the owner of this farm, believes that she is the only woman in the business.

Miss Lathrop as a child was fascinated by watching some dancing white mice in a shop window and insisted on her mother buying her a pair. It was not long before a family of little mice was cozily established in the home Miss Lathrop prepared for them. When they became too numerous a few were sold and then and there was evolved the scheme of making a business of raising and selling the little creatures.

Miss Lathrop breeds white and fancy colored mice and also white rats.

The rat queen attends herself to the feeding of her subjects, but she keeps a corps of six farm hands to do the heavy work.

As many as 8,000 mice are raised and sold each year. The output of guinea pigs amounts annually to some 600 only. The number of rats cannot be estimated with any degree of accuracy, as Miss Lathrop buys and sells rats that are raised elsewhere. Sometimes she buys guinea pigs as well.

Saved 275 Pounds of Pennies.

A chest containing 275 pounds of pennies is on deposit at a bank in Rochester, N. Y., to the credit of Carl W. Stordant, a real-estate man. The pennies, more than 40,000 in all, were turned over to Stordant as an initial payment to bind the sale of a downtown restaurant. The purchaser, a café owner, had taken in the pennies over his bar during a long course of years. He has made a habit of brushing all the pennies he received into a slot which connected with a chest in the cellar.

Horse Saves Two from Quicksand.

A horse saved the lives of two men recently when they were being buried in quicksand. Mounted Patrolman Thomas Leonard, of Brooklyn, heard a cry for help from Old Mill Creek, which runs into Jamaica Bay. He found that William Kopplitsch, twenty-three years old, when crossing a small bridge, had fallen into the creek. Leonard jumped from his horse and started for Kopplitsch, but his feet caught in a quicksand.

He tried to shove a board to Kopplitsch, but soon found himself in as much danger as that man. Leonard whistled to his horse, who trotted down to the shore. The men were up to their waists in water, and were being pulled down steadily by the quicksand. The horse thrust his head toward his master, Leonard clutched the bridle and then seized Kopplitsch with his other hand. "Giddap!" commanded Leonard, and the horse tugged away. Fishermen came and joined in the pulling, and Kopplitsch and Leonard were dragged to safety.

Suffrage in Holland to be Granted.

A canvass of the lawmakers makes it absolutely certain that the franchise will be granted to women when the Dutch Parliament opens, it was announced at suffragette headquarters.

The women made a desperate effort to secure political equality for 1913, as that is the centenary of the recovery of national independence.

Bishop Urges Women to Vote.

Archbishop Patrick W. Riordan, of San Francisco, has issued a letter to all the pastors of his diocese in which he requests that the women of the Catholic Church exercise their right of suffrage.

The archbishop bases his recommendation on the ground that to vote is a civic duty imposed upon them by the State.

To Revise Chinese Tariff.

The Chinese government is formulating a demand for the revision of the customs tariffs in regard to the fixed values of imported goods arranged in 1903, believing that the values of foreign articles have risen since that date.

If the demand should be upheld, the changes will not be of considerable extent, and it is improbable that any decision in the matter will be reached for several months.

"Never Again!" Says Motor Boat Voyager.

William Newstead, of Detroit, one of the party of four who crossed the Atlantic in the motor boat *Detroit*, returned recently on the *Mauretania*, determined never again to cross in so small a boat. He said the trip was very rough; that for seven days there was no water, and that he was ill all the way.

The actual time taken by the motor boat from this port to Queenstown was 21 days and 16 hours. From Queenstown the *Detroit* proceeded to Rotterdam, thence to St. Petersburg.

War Dance Celebrates Jim Thorpe's Return.

When James Thorpe, the greatest all-around athlete of the world, and his teammate, Lewis Tewanima, and their coach, Glenn Warner, arrived at Carlisle, Pa., there was the first public demonstration in honor of the returning athletes from the Olympiad.

The town was a blaze of glory, gaudily decorated with the yellow and gold of the Carlisle School colors, and festive Indian maidens are vying with their brothers to show the returning champions the greatest honors that the Indian can demonstrate.

The parade marched to the athletic field of the Carlisle School, and there the returning athletes were presented with resolutions of esteem and other testimonials in commemoration of their triumph. There was a dinner, after which the students of the school had a "nightshirt parade," and the burning fires on the campus, with the characteristic Indian war dance, afforded the sons of the forest and Uncle Sam's wards an opportunity to give vent to all of their pent-up enthusiasm.

Bride's Plea Stops Aviator.

Lieutenant John Rodgers, pioneer of the United States corps of navy aviators, has been detached from the School of Aviation, at the naval academy, and will assume command of the gunboat *Yankton*.

It is understood Lieutenant Rodgers gave up aviation on the plea of his bride of less than a year, who was kept in constant fear of her husband's life while he continued his hazardous experiments in aviation.

Helen Keller Sings, and Speaks Three Languages.

Helen Adams Keller sang at the Otological Congress, at the Harvard Medical School recently.

Yet this charming and accomplished young woman became deaf, dumb, and blind after a severe illness in January, 1882, when she was but nineteen months old.

She, who could not utter a word, addressed the scientists at the congress, who came from all over the world, in three languages, English, French, and German.

Even these otologists, whose specialty is the study of the ear, its anatomy and its diseases, could not refrain from exclaiming:

"Almost, it is a miracle."

By the infinite patience of her teachers, by the tremendous power of her own mentality, Helen Keller had emerged from the fog in which she seemed to grope helpless.

Professor John L. Wright, of New York, who has devoted his life to instructing deaf mutes and who was Miss Keller's first teacher, introduced her to the learned assemblage. She has been studying singing for eighteen months with Professor White, of the Boston Conservatory of Music. He seated himself at the piano, struck a few chords, and the marvelous young woman began to sing.

As she sang, many in her audience were moved to tears. Her tones were low, but her voice, lost and restored, reached every corner of the great room. Only a few false notes marred her singing.

Miss Keller seemed to look straight ahead out of her sightless eyes; she seemed to gaze into the faces of those before her, to recognize their emotions, to be conscious of their smiles, to be flattered, perhaps, by their wonder. The simplicity of her manner was most delightful and most affecting. There she stood, a pure being, isolated, dwelling alone with her happy, courageous thoughts.

Miss Keller will lecture this autumn, beginning in Schenectady, N. Y., where Mayor Lunn, a socialist, has made her a member of his advisory board.

Chained Convicts Jump from Train and Escape.

While handcuffed together, Melvin Jewell and John Adams, convicts from the Montana State Penitentiary, who were being returned from Big Timber, where they

had been taken as witnesses, escaped by jumping from a Northern Pacific train traveling thirty miles an hour.

The men leaped through a window and rolled down a steep embankment.

Steel Cars Save Scores.

The value of steel cars was made manifest in the Park Avenue tunnel when the 90-ton electric locomotive pulling the Boston midnight express jumped the tracks at the Fifty-fifth Street entrance to the Grand Central Station yards and plunged along over ties for 150 feet, pulling a baggage car and a Pullman sleeper after it and breaking up the train.

The 300 passengers on the train were jolted about by a series of terrific jars, but none was injured. Nor were any of the cars damaged save the one baggage car, which caught fire. There were, however, a few minutes of terror for the passengers on the train owing to the flames that leaped up from the third rail and the cannonading of cross circuits that shot sprays of sparks high in the air.

The fire drew a relay of apparatus, and scores of ladders were let down into the cut for the frightened passengers to climb up. Practically all the 300 passengers on the train made their escape to the street on the ladders or by way of the Fifty-sixth Street stairways.

Grain Crop Exceeds Yield of Last Year.

This year's grain crop in the United States will be far in excess of last year's yield, it has been estimated by the department of agriculture. It will be better than the average crop for the last ten years, and in the case of a number of products will make a new record, if present estimates are not overthrown by conditions now unforeseen.

The country's corn crop, estimated at 2,811,000,000 bushels, will be the largest in the nation's history, with the exception of the years 1906 and 1910, the former being the banner year, with 2,927,000,000 bushels. As for the wheat crop, estimated at 680,000,000 bushels, that will rank fifth in size during the last twenty years.

The oats crop will be the largest the country has gathered, surpassing by 21,000,000 bushels that of 1910, the previous record. In barley, this year will establish a new record, the estimated yield of 202,000,000 bushels being 24,000,000 bushels greater than that of 1906, the previous best years. The yield of rye, 35,000,000 bushels, will equal that of 1910, the former record year.

Of potatoes, which will amount this year to 371,000,000 bushels, only 1909, with its 389,000,000 bushels, produced a larger yield.

Fortune Opened by Young Miner in Virgin Ground.

The richest strike made on the property of the C. K. & N. Mining Company, in Colorado, of late years has been made by Melville B. Rapp, a young mining man, son of Abram Rapp, former president of the Sovereign Mining & Tunnel Company, owning property on Bull Hill in the Cripple Creek district.

Mel Rapp learned all he knows about mining under his father's tuition. Taking a lease on undeveloped territory south of the main C. K. & N. shaft, young Rapp has opened up a vein not previously exposed, and has a fortune in sight.

Drifting south at the 300-foot level into virgin territory, Rapp is breaking with machine drills eight feet of vein matter, and the grab samples taken back of the machines give values by assay tests of from three to ten ounces gold to the ton. The breast of the drift is one glittering exposure, the sylvanite and calaverite showing under the flash of the acetylene lamps now taking the place of candles. A two-car shipment was loaded out and the ore shipped as broken is conservatively estimated at five-ounce ore.

George Ade Surprised by London.

George Ade, the author, motoring in England after a rest cure at Carlsbad, finds London greatly Americanized since his first visit, eighteen years ago.

"It is surprising," he said, "to see American progressiveness in the shops and streets. Shop windows are more attractive, clerks more alert, and everything denotes the influence of American business methods."

Ade has bought twenty Belgian horses for his Indiana farm.

China Plays Politics, and Will Save $65,000,000.

By playing one power off against another, China will save more than $65,000,000 on the loan it is now practically certain it will secure in the next few days from Western financial interests, it is said in official circles.

The powers originally wanted China to borrow $250,000,000 to $300,000,000, on which, in the shape of high interest and exchange jugglery, there would have been a clear profit of about $70,000,000. President Yuan and his advisers have now pared the loan down to $50,000,000, on which the profit will not exceed $2,500,000.

$400,000 Asked for Tribute to Women.

A resolution that would appropriate $400,000 for a memorial building to commemorate the services of the loyal women of the United States during the Civil War, has been passed by the Senate. The building would be occupied as the permanent headquarters of the American Red Cross, and would be erected in the District of Columbia. The appropriation is made available provided the commandery of the State of New York of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion raises an additional $300,000 for the same purpose.

The resolution will go to the House.

Widens Parcels Post Plan.

The Bourne parcels post plan, as embraced in the Senate amendment to the post-office appropriation bill, was rejected by the House of Representatives. In its place the House substituted the more radical plan embodied in an amendment offered by Representative David J. Lewis, of Maryland, who is recognized in the House as an authority on the subject of parcels post and the express systems of the country. The Lewis compromise was adopted by a vote of 143 to 86. Then the bill was sent into conference by a vote of 220 to 0, with instructions to the House conferrees to insist upon the Lewis compromise amendment and to oppose all other Senate amendments to the post-office bill.

The Bourne bill included the fourth-class mail matter only, which would have excluded agricultural products, books, et cetera. The Lewis compromise includes agricultural products and all matter shipped by the express companies. The Bourne bill denied the great C. O. D. privilege and also the right of indemnification by insurance for injured or lost shipments. The Lewis compromise accords those rights. The Lewis compromise provides for a parcels post giving the postmaster general administrative power to make modifications as the needs of the service require. Because of the denial of the C. O. D. privilege and of indemnification for lost shipments in the Bourne plan, the retail and wholesale houses would, it was contended, be denied use of the parcels post under the Bourne plan.

The Lewis compromise provides that the postmaster general within two months shall establish an experimental parcels post with a fifteen pounds' limit to carry any matter handled by the express companies. The rates of postage are fixed by the Lewis compromise at 5 cents for the first pound and 1 cent for each additional pound anywhere within the country of shipment or a contiguous country. For distances of 150 miles the rates proposed by the Lewis plan are 6 cents for the first pound and 2 cents for each additional pound of actual weight, and for each additional 150 miles 1 cent per pound additional, the zones being 150 miles.

Cuba Ordered to Pay $500,000 Debt.

President Gomez, of Cuba, has been called upon by the United States government to make an early settlement of the claims that have been pending against Cuba for the last two years, amounting to over $500,000, growing out of the Reilly contracts for the waterworks plant and sanitation of the city of Cienfuegos. For more than a year there have been exchanges of communications on this subject, and the last note, drafted recently by the state department, calls on President Gomez in emphatic terms to make settlement in accordance with the existing contracts which were made under the provisions of the treaty for the sanitation of Cuba.

This latest demand followed the receipt of a communication from the Cuban president that the government is without funds to make the payment and that an act of congress will be necessary for the appropriation of the amount. This statement, which was somewhat startling to the Washington authorities, was not wholly surprising in the face of rumors that have reached here for some time that the government machinery of Cuba has been honeycombed with graft. Provision for payment of contracts for Cienfuegos and other public works was made in the loan of over $10,000,000 which Cuba received from Speyer Brothers, of New York, with the approval of the United States under article 5 of the treaty.

The recent racial insurrection in Cuba proved a trying crisis for the administration. That situation was closely watched by the Washington authorities, as have been other conditions of political unrest during the last two or three years, but it has been declared that at no time was there any intention of intervention on the part of the American government. The visit of Secretary Knox to Cuba in May, when returning from his Central and South American tour, was thought to be timely. A number of important questions were discussed in person between Mr. Knox and President Gomez, and it was thought that the Reilly claims would be settled shortly.

For some time it has appeared that Go-

mez was withholding final payment on the Cienfuegos contracts on certain technicalities. Cuba had reserved payment of fifteen per cent of the Reilly contract, which called in full for more than $3,000,000, until the entire work was completed and accepted by the government. Acceptance was made nearly two years ago. When the Reilly claim was presented it was held that all the work had been done and the expense had been borne by the subcontractors, and Cuba wished to make certain that they would be properly cared for. Lately, it seems, the claims have been turned over to these subcontractors, but still excuses were made for not meeting them.

Judge Attacks Chauffeurs.

A chauffeur found guilty of taking out his employer's automobile without permission was sentenced to serve eleven months and twenty-eight days recently, in the penitentiary, by Judge Dike, in the Kings County, N. Y., court. The prisoner, Richard Kenney, 27 years old, had pleaded guilty to grand larceny in the second degree. He had previously served time in the Elmira Reformatory.

"There is no law better known to you drivers," said Judge Dike, in sentencing Kenney, "than that law which makes the act of which you plead guilty a crime. It would seem that your profession has a large and undesirable element of felons or crooks in its ranks. Many atrocious crimes of late have been traced to the criminal participation of you drivers. I should think the decent drivers would unite to purge your profession of the bad men, just as I think the decent men in the police department should try to rid the force of a similar element in its ranks."

English Airman Fenwick Killed.

R. C. Fenwick, one of the most experienced English airmen, while competing in war-office tests over Salisbury Plain, England, recently, fell with an aeroplane of his own design from the height of 200 feet, and was killed. The machine suddenly turned turtle.

Mr. Fenwick, who was the sixteenth airman killed in England, had boasted that, with the exception of the engine, he had made his machine in his native village with the help of a carpenter.

Says He Has Found Cancer Microbe.

Doctor Gaston Odin, of Paris, France, makes the announcement that he has discovered the microbe of cancer, and has succeeded in isolating and cultivating it. He says before long to supply tubes containing vaccine which will cure cancer or act as preventive.

Doctor Odin said his researches dated back many years. Only six months ago were they crowned with success. He added that Doctor Matruchot, who occupies the chair of botany at the Sorbonne, had verified his discovery, and asserted its genuineness, and that Professor Lannois, of the School of Medicine, had pronounced it impeccable.

"Succeeded," said Doctor Odin, "in cultivating the microbe in conformity with the famous Pasteur methods, and I have a series of cultures formal proof of my discovery. The cancer microbe is a parasite of the cell, that is to say, a protoplasmic being, an inferior living organism, which forms, develops, and reproduces itself. The variety of its forms surpasses imagination. The cancer amœba is flat and gelatinous in composition, with irregular torn edges surrounding a central kernel—that is, when it is in a static or primitive form. When, in consequence of the modification of its environment, the amœba is able to develop, it spreads, shoots forth in all directions."

Questioned as to the consequences of his discovery, Doctor Odin said he hoped that his vaccine would enable him to do for cancer what Doctor Roux did for diphtheria and Jenner for smallpox. "Whether or not I have discovered a means to prevent or cure cancer," he remarked, "it is already established that by the aid of my discovery we can tell with certainty whether an individual is cancerous or not. An examination of his blood will reveal the fact. The active element already at my disposal enables me to kill the cancer microbes when the disease is not too far advanced, and a culture of cancer microbes which I obtained a few days ago results in the attenuation of cancerous lesions."

Doctor Odin closed his statement with the assertion that his vaccine might be applied with beneficial results in cases of smoker's cancer.

Corn Crop Near Highest Record.

High meat prices are caused by short corn crops, and since this season's yield of the cereal will probably be the third largest in the history of the country, the housewife may expect a material reduction in beef prices next winter. Moreover, bumper crops of all kinds will probably effect a reduction in the cost of living.

This was the opinion expressed by Secretary of Agriculture Wilson.

"Beef will be cheaper than it has been for a number of years," said the secretary. "The best beef is fed on corn, but with that cereal so scarce in the last year that it soared to 70 cents a bushel, many cattle raisers felt they could not feed their cattle for slaughtering purposes on corn and get their money back. The result was that little good quality beef entered Chicago and prices rose.

"This year the corn crop will reach more than 2,800,000,000 bushels. This will appreciably lower beef prices, aided by the splendid hay and oat crop.

"But the price of beef will never be as low as it was a decade ago. This is due to the fact that the broad grazing lands have been split into homesteads.

"The oat crop is expected to be the biggest ever harvested; the hay crop will be enormous. Cotton is about the only crop that will fall slightly below the average. The good peach crop is taken as an indication that all fruits will be plentiful this fall."

$11,341,159 Spent to Amuse Paris.

According to the recently issued report of the municipal administration of Paris, the total receipts of the theaters of the French capital last year were $11,341,159. Among the beneficiaries from this volume of business are the poor, who by reason of the tax of 10 per cent imposed on theatrical receipts in their behalf will receive $1,225,013.

The steady growth of Paris and the devotion of its people and the constant throng of foreign visitors to theatrical and musical entertainments are shown by the fact that the receipts of 1911 from these sources exceeded those of any previous year, not excepting even the years 1878, 1889, and 1900, when international expositions of world-wide interest were held in Paris.

There are in Paris four theaters—the Comedie Francaise, Odeon, the Opera, and Opera Comique—which receive subventions from the government, and 40 regular theaters, among which are included the Chatlet, Gymnase, Gaite, and Palais Royal, which receive no subvention. There are besides 12 large cinematograph theaters, 38 café concerts, 8 music halls, 10 skating rinks, velodromes, and circuses, among which are included the Magic City and Luna Park, both originally American enterprises; 6 permanent balls or dancing places, including the Bal Tabarin, Bullier, and Moulin Rouge, and finally three classical concerts, viz., the Concert Lamoureaux, Colonne, and the Conservatoire; in all, 121 regular places of amusement.

European Geographers Coming.

Fifty representatives of geographical societies and universities of sixteen European countries have enrolled, it is announced, for a tour of the United States as guests of the American Geographical Society. The tour is to begin with a celebration at New York of the opening of a new building of the American Geographical Society, marking the sixtieth anniversary of the organization. Professor William Morris Davis, of Harvard, is to conduct the excursion, which is to cover approximately 10,000 miles and take two months' time. After crossing the continent to Seattle and San Francisco, making stops at points of interest, the party will return through the Grand Cañon and the Southern States.

Advises Consumptives to Stay at Home.

Physicians in all of the Eastern and Southern States will be asked by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, to stop sending consumptives in the last stages of tuberculosis and without sufficient funds to the southwestern part of the United States, according to an announcement made to-day by that association.

While it is impossible to tell accurately how many consumptives there are at present living in the States of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Southern California, and western Texas, it is probable that no less than 10 per cent of the 6,000,000 people in this territory have tuberculosis themselves or have come to the West because some member of their family has had it. Every year, the health authorities estimate, not less than 10,000 consumptives hopelessly diseased come West to die.

In an effort to stop the migration of consumptives of this class to the Southwest, the National Association will ask physicians to be more careful in ordering patients to go away, and will also ask railroads to discontinue their practice of selling "charity" tickets to those who cannot afford to pay full fare. "No consumptive should go to Colorado, California, or the West for his health," says the association, "unless he has a good chance of recovery from his disease, and unless especially he has at least $1,000 to spend for this purpose, over and above what his family may need. "Tuberculosis can be cured in any part of the United States, and it is not necessary for a tuberculosis patient to go West."

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